'Men of Kent': Gender and Nationhood in Regional Perspective, 1815-1837.

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Kathryn Beresford

Abstract

This thesis concerns the relationship between English gendered identities and the specificities of region and location. In the years following 1815, the county of Kent was imbued with a powerful 'sense of place'. The county was defined by its militarily strategic position, emphasised by the propaganda, experience and memory of the Napoleonic wars, and its predominantly agricultural economy. Despite the cessation of the wars and economic instability, Kent was perceived as the 'Vanguard of Liberty' and the 'Garden of England'. This 'sense of place' informed the articulation of gender and nationhood.

Representations of the 'Men of Kent', a regionally specific assertion of masculine identity, were characterised by behaviour, speech and appearance associated with physical prowess, bearing arms for one's country, and the virtues of 'sturdy Yeomen', those who owned and tilled their own land. 'Men of Kent' were articulated across a series of diverse political campaigns surrounding 'Reform', Agricultural 'Protection', the 'Swing' riots and, on a particularly influential scale, Catholic Emancipation. Other forms of belonging in Kent were not so specifically 'Kentish'. 'Romantic' visions of agrarian-based society, in which hierarchies and inequalities were 'naturalised' - often conceived as 'Old England' - were expressed by political campaigners in Kent and in provincial Southern England more generally. These included 'protectionist' organizations and landlords, and the writings of William Cobbett.

The identity of the 'Men of Kent' was expressed primarily through the institutions of the 'county community' such as county meetings and the press. During this period, participation in, and imaginings of, the dominant Kentish 'public sphere' evolved from being relatively narrow – only the aristocratic elite were able to speak for the 'county' – to broader, but still hierarchical conceptions, inflected along the lines of gender, class and race. The Irish, notably the Catholic Association and itinerant labourers, were particularly definitional 'Others' to the 'Men of Kent'. The militaristic and agrarian masculinities of the 'Men of Kent', and related conceptions of society, were also often contested, notably during the labourers' 'Swing' riots and through individual subjectivities.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

1. Introduction

As spoken by Mr Jingle to Mr Pickwick, in Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*, the famous line runs as follows:

Kent, Sir, everyone knows Kent, apples, hops, cherries, and women![1]

Kent summoned up strong images: of pastoral opulence, orchards, market gardens and voluptuous maidens, with glowing cheeks and lips like cherries! Written in the mid-1830s, Dickens's description sits relatively comfortably with certain other images of this particularly 'English' county from the time, which included the popular notion of the 'Garden of England'.

There was, of course, much more to Kent in this era than agriculture and women. During and after the Napoleonic wars, residents and chroniclers displayed an acute awareness of Kent's militarily strategic location, jutting out at the south-east corner of England, between London and the continent. According to Wordsworth's famous poem, written at the height of the invasion scare in 1803, Kent and the 'Men of Kent', were the 'Vanguard of Liberty' against foreign invasion and tyranny. *Men*

[1] Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, First published 1837, (Ware: Wordsworth Edition, 1993), 20-21.

were conspicuous in representations of the 'Kentish' landscape, whether as the sturdy 'yeomen', who cultivated the picturesque fields, or as the warrior like 'Men of Kent' or 'Kentish Men', who defended their lengthy shoreline. Indeed, Mr Jingle's jaunty list of Kent's most aesthetically pleasing products – 'apples, hops, cherries and women' - notably skirted around the heart of many representations of the 'county'. In the early nineteenth century, representations of Kent, and 'Kentishness', its people and location, often pivoted around specific conceptions of men.

In early nineteenth-century England, gender roles were particularly unstable. The years following 1815 were ones of domestic unrest and imperial expansion when questions of nationhood, citizenship and subject-hood were hotly contested. No longer directly threatened by continental invaders, the boundaries of the nation continued to be challenged from 'within'. Campaigns surrounding Parliamentary 'Reform' and Catholic Emancipation provoked debates about who was 'manly' or 'English' enough to claim political rights, or on what grounds others should be denied. Meanwhile, anxieties about the 'state of the nation' were intensified by sporadic economic depressions and social unrest among the labouring poor 'at home', as well as in Ireland. The economy was in recession from 1815, and hit particular low points in the last years of the 1810s and again in the late 1820s. There was widespread rural poverty, manifesting in rising levels of agrarian violence and unrest, and which peaked in the 'Captain Swing' riots of 1830.

This thesis explores how gendered identities in this tumultuous period could be contingent upon conceptualisations of regions and their relationships with the wider world. For the purposes of this study, regions are defined sub-national geographical areas with flexible, historically specific boundaries.[2] Kent, of course, is also a county, an administrative unit that had relatively fixed geographical borders.[3] Nevertheless, my focus, rather than on the geographical region or county itself, is social and cultural: I am interesting in the imaginings of 'county', 'region' and 'nation', and associated forms of belonging, expressed by groups and individuals who at some point lived in, or engaged with, the county of Kent.

Moreover, I am not purely concerned with 'Kent' and 'Kentish identities' as such. Conceptualisations of the 'county' of Kent were not a definitional factor in all forms of belonging I analyse. A central line of inquiry concerns at what stages, and to whom, the 'county' had meaning and significance. I also ask at what points other perceived social or geographical ties, to rural England and the 'landed interest', or generic associations with nation and Empire, were of greater importance in framing identities. Although the boundaries between 'rural' and 'urban' areas, the metropole and counties/provinces are contested and blurred, I explore moments when perceived differences between them, particularly the juxtaposition between industrial and agricultural England in this era of great change, were crucial

[2] For a discussion of definitions of regions for historians, see Edward Royle 'Introduction', in Edward Royle ed., *Issues of Regional Identity. In Honour of John Marshall* (Manchester University Press, 1998), 1. Pat Hudson, 'Regional and Local History: Globalisation, Postmodernism and the Future', *Journal of Rural and Local Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1999).

[3] County: 'One of the territorial divisions of Great Britain and Ireland, formed as the result of a variety of historical events, and serving as the most important divisional unit in the country for administrative, judicial, and political purposes', Oxford English Dictionary Online URL: <http://dictionary.oed.com>

reference points in discourses of nationhood.[4] Although I deal with them only briefly, local and familial ties, to the town, village, parish or family, often played important roles in people's lives.[5]

Moreover, I have concentrated mainly on evidence from rural and provincial Kent: the networks of market towns, villages and country houses, which centred upon Maidstone and Canterbury. I explore how people from these varying and interlinked areas imagined themselves as a 'county community'. Evidence from the seaports and the London hinterland, sites that would raise interesting questions of liminality, have been largely omitted because of limitations of time and space. Kent, therefore, is the lens through which I explore forms of belonging from the local to the global, with a particular focus on the regional and national.

My choice of Kent was inspired by the findings of archival research. Stimulated by debates about religion and nationhood in the early nineteenth century, and with an interest in gender history, I began researching Protestantism and identity during the Emancipation Crisis of 1828/9 at the Centre for Kentish Studies in Maidstone.[6] Searching at first only for information on generic 'Englishness', I detected

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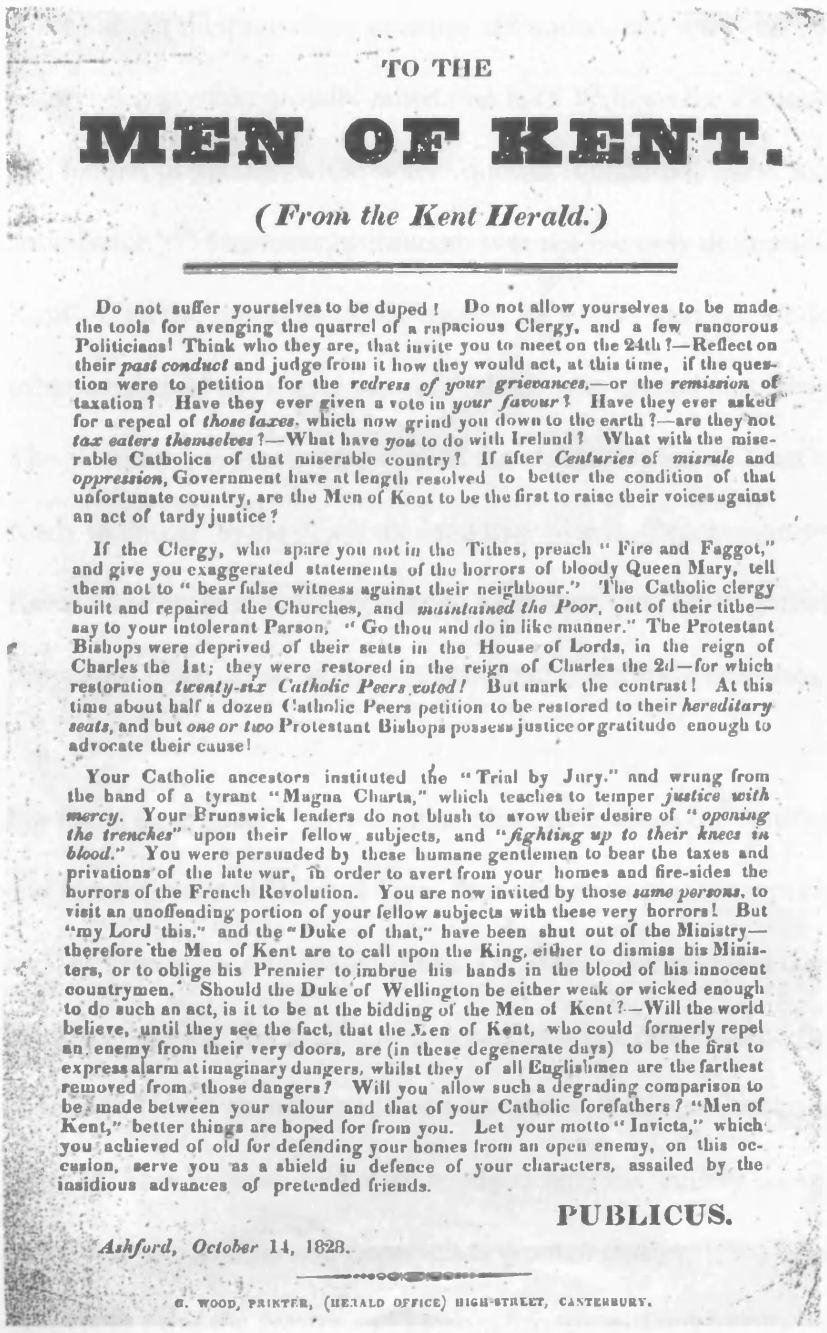
[4] The development of culturally specific imaginings of the differences between town and country are explored in Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).
[5] For an exploration of the importance of the parish in people's lives, particular prior to the New Poor Law in 1834, see David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 43, 166.
[6] The foundation texts on nationhood that inspired this project are Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 - 1837* (London: Vintage edition, 1996); John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994). For gender, important works are Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Jane Rendall ed., *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

something that the histories I had read did not explain. At least as much as people talked about being 'English', and much more than they talked about being 'Britons', political speeches and posters talked about being 'Men of Kent'.[7]

Like the rhetoric of the constitution, or of generic nationhood, that of the 'Men of Kent' gave agency to groups and individuals from across the social spectrum, from aristocrats and gentry, through to farmers, urban artisans and labourers. Although the identity of the 'Men of Kent' could be articulated in varying ways, those who wielded this rhetoric predominantly advocated quasi-militaristic forms of behaviour, speech and appearance associated with bearing arms for one's country, with physical prowess, and loyalty.[8] Never a separatist ideology, 'Men of Kent' usually identified with a kind of heightened 'Englishness', rather than any unifying 'British' identity. Indeed, England is mentioned and evoked far more than Britain and Empire; while not entirely absent, references to the latter were relatively rare. To 'Kentish' perspectives on 'Englishness', then, a 'sense of place' was fundamental.[9] Their martial prowess was derived from Kent's strategic location, jutting out towards the continent, as England's first line of defence. Historical

[7] See Figure 1.
[8] Scott Myerly defines militarism and military virtues as 'the values embodied in the military model: bravery and duty, discipline, self-control, conformity, order and hierarchy'. Scott Hughes Myerly, *British Military Spectacle from the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard, 1996), 11.
[9] In thinking about a 'sense of place' I have drawn upon the work of Doreen Massey and her reflections on how the identity of a place depends on its relationship with the outside world from which its internalised history can be orientated. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).



TO THE

MEN OF KENT.

(From the Kent Herald.)

Do not suffer yourselves to be duped! Do not allow yourselves to be made the tools for avenging the quarrel of a rapacious Clergy, and a few rancorous Politicians! Think who they are, that invite you to meet on the 24th?—Reflect on their *past conduct* and judge from it how they would act, at this time, if the question were to petition for the *redress of your grievances*,—or the *remission* of taxation? Have they ever given a vote in *your favour*? Have they ever asked for a repeal of *those taxes*, which now grind you down to the earth?—are they not *tax eaters themselves*?—What have *you* to do with Ireland? What with the miserable Catholics of that miserable country? If after *Centuries* of *misrule* and *oppression*, Government have at length resolved to better the condition of that unfortunate country, are the Men of Kent to be the first to raise their voices against an act of tardy justice?

If the Clergy, who spare you not in the Tithes, preach "Fire and Faggot," and give you exaggerated statements of the horrors of bloody Queen Mary, tell them not to "bear false witness against their neighbour." The Catholic clergy built and repaired the Churches, and *maintained the Poor*, out of their tithe—say to your intolerant Parson, "Go thou and do in like manner." The Protestant Bishops were deprived of their seats in the House of Lords, in the reign of Charles the 1st; they were restored in the reign of Charles the 2d—for which restoration *twenty-six Catholic Peers voted!* But mark the contrast! At this time about half a dozen Catholic Peers petition to be restored to their *hereditary seats*, and but *one or two* Protestant Bishops possess justice or gratitude enough to advocate their cause!

Your Catholic ancestors instituted the "Trial by Jury," and wrung from the hand of a tyrant "Magna Charta," which teaches to temper *justice with mercy*. Your Brunswick leaders do not blush to avow their desire of "*opening the trenches*" upon their fellow subjects, and "*fighting up to their knees in blood.*" You were persuaded by these humane gentlemen to bear the taxes and privations of the late war, in order to avert from your homes and fire-sides the horrors of the French Revolution. You are now invited by those *same persons*, to visit an unoffending portion of your fellow subjects with these very horrors! But "my Lord this," and the "Duke of that," have been shut out of the Ministry—therefore the Men of Kent are to call upon the King, either to dismiss his Ministers, or to oblige his Premier to imbrue his hands in the blood of his innocent countrymen. Should the Duke of Wellington be either weak or wicked enough to do such an act, is it to be at the bidding of the Men of Kent?—Will the world believe, until they see the fact, that the Men of Kent, who could formerly repel an enemy from their very doors, are (in these degenerate days) to be the first to express alarm at imaginary dangers, whilst they of all Englishmen are the farthest removed from those dangers? Will you allow such a degrading comparison to be made between your valour and that of your Catholic forefathers? "Men of Kent," better things are hoped for from you. Let your motto "Invicta," which you achieved of old for defending your homes from an open enemy, on this occasion, serve you as a shield in defence of your characters, assailed by the insidious advances of pretended friends.

PUBLICUS.

Ashford, October 14, 1828.

G. WOOD, PRINTER, (HERALD OFFICE) HIGH-STREET, CANTERBURY.

Figure 1. Poster: 'To the Men of Kent,' 1828. EKA Sa/ZP2. In the text, a supporter of the Catholic Emancipation Bill uses the legends of the 'Men of Kent' to justify support for their campaign.

stories about their repelling enemies abounded, and were reproduced in songs and poetry. It was often proudly noted that both William the Conqueror and the Romans had landed in Sussex: while other counties foundered, 'Kent made no submission'.[10] However, militarism was not the only defining facet of the 'Men of Kent'. Like the economy of the county, they were also predominantly agrarian, often envisaged as 'sturdy yeomen', those who owned and farmed their own land. The 'Kentish yeomen' were seen as the ultimate 'Men of Kent': brawny, brave and ready to defend to the death the land they tilled. Representations of the 'Men of Kent' were more than a propaganda tool: they were an important way that men in the region made sense of the world around them and their place in it.

My focus on men and masculinities also came out of the sources. Female agency and identities are difficult to identify in, for example, accounts of county meetings and the provincial newspaper press. To analyse femininities requires reading this evidence 'against the grain', and extensive work on evidence from the 'private sphere'.[11] This is carried out for the purposes of this project on a limited scale, to illustrate how women, like men, engaged with the 'county community' in gendered ways. For the middle and upper-class women analysed, the prime forms of belonging were the family and kinship groups, although their 'Englishness' was evoked in public arenas such as missionary societies and philanthropic

[10] A line from a version of 'The Man of Kent' issued in the local press in 1828 and reproduced in *The Times*, 24/10/1828. 'The Man of Kent' was used regularly in political rhetoric throughout the 1820s and 1830', often with special verses written to suit a particular occasion. For examples associated with the Emancipation Crisis, see *Kentish Gazette (hereafter KG)*, 14/10/1828; *Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser (hereafter MJKA)*, 28/10/1828.

[11] For an extensive discussion of theory and method in women's and gender history, see Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship* (Ithaca, N.Y.:Cornell University Press, 2006), part 1.

organisations.[12] However, in the campaigns surrounding citizenship through which regional forms of belonging were chiefly expressed, stridently masculine identities such as the 'Men of Kent' consigned women primarily to the realms of the 'Other'. It is in this area that this project adds new elements to discussions of identities. The main thrust of this thesis, therefore, concerns masculinities.[13]

I argue that, in the early nineteenth century, Kentish men experienced a heightened sense of place, informed by specific conceptions of time and change. The prolonged conflict with France and the invasion scares of the 1800s made many people acutely aware of their county's fortress-like location. The militaristic 'foundation myths' of the 'Men of Kent' were given new impetus by the experience and memory of the county's specific role in the Napoleonic wars.[14] Martial images of masculinity had a powerful hold in the imaginations of many Kentish men.

The social and geographical peculiarities that underpinned the production of identities were also related to collective interpretations of the county's rural landscape, agricultural economy and proximity to London. Representations could be uniquely Kentish, including the notion of the 'Garden of England'. At the same

[12] For female involvement in politics in this period and its limitations, see Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson eds., *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat* (London: Macmillan, 2000); Leonora Davidoff and Catherine Hall 'Introduction to Revised Edition' in *Family Fortunes : Men and Women of the Middle Classes 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002 edition), xxiii-xxiv.

[13] This is not to suggest that there isn't much research still to be done on a women's participation in rural and provincial politics. Gleadle and Richardson suggest many areas for further research, including women's participation in the campaigns for and against the corn laws. Gleadle and Richardson, 'Introduction', in Gleadle and Richardson eds., *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860.*

[14] For a recent discussion of 'foundation myths', with particular reference to the importance of religion, see Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 6-7; for a discussion of comparably strident masculinist foundation myths in early twentieth-century Northern Ireland, see Alvin Jackson, 'Unionist myths 1912-1985', *Past and Present,* vol.136, no. 1.

time, many of the attributes of Kentish 'Englishness' could be more broadly associated with the culture of southern or agricultural England, or the 'landed interest'. All were crucially underpinned by conceptions of long and short term changes in the economic and social structure of the countryside. In response to the widespread rioting and unrest of 1830, for example, the Kentish elite blamed a break-down in the correct operation of society, of 'paternalist' structures in which 'yeomen' flourished, labourers were well fed and cared for, and when their own lands were well cultivated and valuable.[15] This is what commentators as diverse as William Cobbett and Philip, fourth Earl Stanhope, understood as the correct working of 'Old England', a powerful and surprisingly complex vision of 'Englishness' that had great resonance in this era.[16]

Kentish identities did not exist in isolation. The 'unique' virtues of the people and landscape of Kent could be staked against the inferior qualities of a variety of 'Others', including the industrialists of Birmingham, ministers at Westminster, colonised peoples and the 'unruly' Irish. The Irish were particularly significant 'Others', rendered culturally visible by campaigns against Catholic Emancipation, which had broad-based support, visiting Irish harvesters, and barracked Irish soldiers. The sturdy farmers and green landscape of Kent were compared to 'inferior' Irish Catholic counterparts, framing assertions of 'English' – and Protestant – power, and fears of decline. The growing power of free-traders and

[15] 'Paternalism', in this context, was chiefly a nostalgic ideal harking back to a 'golden age' prior to the corruption of familiar structures of society. E P Thompson, 'Patricians and Plebs', in *Customs in Common* (London: Penguin, 1991), 23-24, Williams, *The Country and the City*, 49.
[16] See also Ian Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 6.

industrialists, with their constituencies in other regions, also evoked a sense of threat to Kent's image as a particularly prosperous county. These issues led to complex mental mappings of the relationships between the people of Kent and the wider world.

On some occasions, these references to 'county', 'region' or 'nation', and their exclusions, may have indicated no more than an attachment to locality, or a politician's attempt to appeal to his electorate. Such language nevertheless signalled a common landscape of knowledge, functioning similarly to 'banal nationalism': the varying meanings of 'Kentishness', and Kentish 'Englishness', were 'deeply embedded' in the way many people in the county interpreted the world around them.[17] At the same time, my analysis of Kent provides an example – for England at least - of how the local or regional can function as a metaphor for the national, as well as generate forms of belonging of its own.[18]

A final note on periodisation: for the purposes of this study, the dates 1815 to 1837, like the boundaries of Kent, are flexible parameters. The bulk of the analysis concentrates on the years of heightened political activity between 1828 and 1832. The wider timescale has been selected to contextualise and strengthen my arguments. The choice of 1815 in a thesis that argues for the importance of the experience and memory of the Napoleonic wars, and of the impact of the downturn in the agricultural economy (which stemmed from around 1814) is relatively self-

[17] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), 11.
[18] Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

evident.[19] My cut-off date is more arbitrary, chosen primarily to ascertain the aftermath of years of intense political fervour between 1828 and 1832. The specific date was selected because 1837 was the final year of the Kent Yeomanry Cavalry, before it was substantially reduced. The Yeomanry was, as I will demonstrate, an institution through which the 'militaristic masculinities' of the 'Men of Kent' were keenly articulated. Its demise, although ordered by central government, I interpret as indicative that the 'moment' of the 'Men of Kent' was on the wane.

2. Literature review

i. Theoretical Underpinnings

This project is about the historical and cultural specificity of identities. Its theoretical underpinnings are derived from recent thinking in the field of cultural studies and are influenced by post-structural theory.[20] I understand discourse in a Foucaultian sense: as a way of organising information that is always defined by culturally specific networks of power.[21] Following the work of de Saussure and Derrida, I take the viewpoint that language and communication must be understood as a system of representation; they are the attempts people make to signify the 'real' through language and other representational forms. Language and communication, in this sense, have to be understood as not just a representation of

[19] The myriad of economic troubles that marked the cessation of the war included falling prices and wages, which exacerbated debates about the currency and Corn Laws. Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People, England 1783-1846* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 251-264.
[20] Useful texts in understanding these kinds of approaches have included Ben Agger, *Critical Social Theories. An Introduction* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998); Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew eds., *Modernity and Its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).
[21] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998. First published 1976), 5, 69, 94; 'The Birth of the Asylum', in *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Routledge: London, 1999. First published 1961), ch. 9.

the 'real' but always transformative, never exactly the same as that which they signify.[22] I also use the Gramscian notion of hegemony, which analyses the role of ideology in the maintenance of power in capitalist states and how change can come about through challenges to, and gradual erosion of, the dominant discourse.[23]

Culture, according to Raymond Williams, is the 'signifying system through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored'.[24] Culture, therefore, is the meanings assigned to all things, the ways that people make sense of the world around them. In its interaction with society, culture is not merely a passive reflection, or even an interpretation of the 'real', but itself constitutes the ways that society is organised into hierarchies of power. Culture is expressed and transformed through symbols and language, the comprehension of which is shared by the people of a particular culture.[25] The meaning of no cultural form is static; meanings are characterised by constant slippage.[26] Likewise, Lacan asserted that human individuals must be conceived 'not as stable or singular subjects but the occupants of shifting subject positions'.[27]

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[22] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1981), 19-20; *Of Grammatology* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), ch. 2; Ferdinand de Saussure, *Writings in General Linguistics* (Oxford University Press, 2006. First published c. 1916).
[23] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 215.
[24] Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (University of Chicago Press 1995), 12-13.
[25] Catherine Hall, 'Introduction' in C. Hall ed., *Cultures of Empire. Colonisers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, A Reader* (Manchester University Press, 2000), 11.
[26] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'', in Raphael Samuel ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).
[27] Agger, *Critical Social Theories,* 36.

Edward W. Said famously argued for the significance of 'difference' and the 'Other' in understanding identities, historical and current.[28] My application of these theories has also been inspired by Stuart Hall's concept of 'identification'. 'Identification' is derived from psychoanalytic theory, including Freud's theory of 'projective identification', which, as developed by Lacan, implies that identity is not an essential part of the 'self' but always formulated, from the moment of a baby's first encounter with its parents, through attempts to match 'some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or with a group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation'.[29] Thus identities are dependent upon both 'identification' of the Self and the rejection of 'Others', whose definitional characteristics are conceived upon the lines of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and race.

Many of the above theorists, notably Foucault and Said, have been criticised for their 'gender blindness'.[30] Nevertheless, their theories are flexible enough to function successfully with the assumption that gender is a 'useful category of historical analysis'.[31] This belief lies at the heart of this thesis. I owe a debt to the struggles and scholarship of previous generations of feminist historians and writers to be able to assume, as I do throughout my work, that the ways in which people engage with space and place, like the language they use and the actions they perform, are

[28] Edward W. Said in *Orientalism* (London, Penguin, 1995. First published 1978), 3.
[29] Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs Identity?' in Stuart Hall ed., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 2.
[30] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (London: Duke University Press, 1995).
[31] Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: a Useful Category of Historical Analysis', in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 5 (1986).

gendered and that 'gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power'.[32] While much early work in the field dealt with uncovering women's history and 'femininities', recent work has concentrated on the constitutive formation of masculinities and femininities, including the importance of 'hegemonic masculinities' – the perceived masculine qualities of a dominant grouping - in the exercise of power in societies.[33]

Identities are expressed in many cultural forms, through language, visual imagery, behaviour and embodiment. Individuals experience them as 'subjectivities', the ways in which 'identities' are internalised. In other words, the study of subjectivities examines how a person situates themselves as the subject of discourses of knowledge and power. Following the pioneering theories of Foucault, the body itself has been theorised as a site of historical construction.[34] My analysis of the 'Men of Kent' has been informed by the theories of Judith Butler, concerning the physical performance of gender roles and the constant and complex material/cultural dialogue that creates subjectivities.[35] Gender roles are 'performed', in different cultural and historical contexts, both as conscious theatre and 'the unconscious reiterations of gendered styles and gestures'.[36]

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[32] Scott, 'Gender: a Useful Category of Historical Analysis', 1067.
[33] John Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop Journal,* vol. 38 (1994); R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).
[34] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One.* 139-40, 145-8.
[35] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 12-16. Judith Butler, 'Merely Cultural', *New Left Review,* vol.227 (1998), 33-44.
[36] Jane M. Jacobs and Catherine Nash, 'Too Little, Too Much, Cultural Feminist Geographers', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol.10, no. 3 (2003), 274. R.W. Connell also highlighted the importance of conceptions of the body to the construction of 'hegemonic masculinities' in modern societies. Indeed, he argues that: 'True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's

Language, however, remains of prime importance: this thesis explores the contention that identities can be political identities 'articulated' through political discourse particularly at moments of instability and crisis. 'Articulation', according to Laclau and Mouffe is 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice'; in other words, it is the hegemony and contestation of representations of the self and the social, through which identities are both expressed and transformed.[37] These theories were developed with reference to 'radical' political movements; many of the discourses I analyse were also formulated through electoral politics, and debates about citizenship. Nevertheless, I define politics in the widest sense: as the operation of discourse in all social arenas from families to parliaments.[38]

Identities are also imagined through perceptions of the interaction between people and place. Neither can exist in isolation: while the self can be conceived through a rejection of the 'Other', a geographical space can be given a sense of identity by its relationships to the wider world. As historical and cultural geographers, such as Doreen Massey, have demonstrated, identities are dependent upon a 'sense of place', defined by wider spatial and historical contexts and constantly changing

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bodies - to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body'. In other words, there is often perceived to be a direct link between the 'natural' attributes of the male body, and how men behave. Connell, *Masculinities*, 45.

[37] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001. Second Edition), 105.

[38] For an account of how the politics of gender operates at all levels, see Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (Columbia University Press, 1999. Revised edition).

'networks of social relations'.[39] Places and their related identities are thus 'the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity': always under construction, never absolute, and thus, always historical.[40]

ii. Nation/Region/County

These innovative approaches have destabilised many traditional areas of historical analysis. An important development in the past few decades has been the deconstruction of monolithic 'national' histories. Rather than being fixed entities, nations are, according to Benedict Anderson's famous formulation, 'imagined political communities'. They are 'imagined' as it is impossible to acquire face-to-face knowledge of their members, and have 'finite, if elastic boundaries. National belonging is also '...conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'. Nations emerged in their modern form at a specific moment when the sovereignty of religion and kingship were being eroded, and the betterment of technology led to new conceptions of time and new forms of communications, notably print culture.[41]

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[39] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender,* 4, 120-121. See also K. Anderson, 'Introduction' in K. Anderson and F. Gale eds., *Cultural Geographies* (Melbourne: Addison Wesley, 1999), 5-6; Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993); Mona Damath and Karen M. Marin, 'Travels with Feminist Historical Geography', *Gender, Place and Culture,* vol. 10, no. 3 (2003), 257 -264; Peter Jackson , The Cultural Politics of Masculinity: Towards a Social Geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* New Series, vol. 16, no. 2 (1991), 199-213.

[40] Massey calls into question the difference between 'space', which is normally conceived as abstract and meaningless, and 'place', which is normally assumed to be easily defined 'meaningful, lived and every day'. Another feature of recent work by Massey and others has been to call into question the relationship between time and space. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 6,9; Massey, Allen and Sarre eds., *Human Geography Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 14-15.

[41] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Revised Edition (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 5-7. Anderson followed a tradition of Marxist accounts of nations, partially responding to Ernest Gellner's theory of the 'fabrication' of nations at a certain stage of capitalist development, reiterated in E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 48-9.

Anderson's theory has been criticised for its neglect of gender and its failure to account of the impact of empire.[42] Recent scholarship on national identity has explored how the 'Othering' of women and colonised peoples impacted upon nation-making projects and forms of governments in nations and empires. According to Cooper and Stoler, the developments of metropole and colony need to be placed in a 'single analytical field', to understand 'how a grammar of difference was continuously and vigilantly crafted as people in colonies refashioned and contested European claims to superiority'.[43] These contentions raised particularly pertinent questions for English history: Catherine Hall argued that the 'identity of the colonizer is a constitutive part of Englishness'.[44]

Another line of historical inquiry to disrupt unproblematic understandings of 'English'/'British' nationhood is the story of 'Four Nations': the inter-related histories of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, themselves shaped by the varying fortunes of their constituent parts in relation to the wider fortunes of the British Empire. The origins of 'Four Nations' history lie with J.G.A Pocock, whose 'plea for a new subject' beyond British histories that assumed the 'nation' possessed unchallenged integrity, spawned influential works that broached the interaction of regions in national stories.[45] Hugh Kearney, for example, emphasised

[42] Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Introduction', in Eley and Suny eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 24-29.
[43] Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, 'Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda' in Cooper and Stoler eds., *Tensions of Empire; Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3-4.
[44] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects. Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 12.
[45] J.G.A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a new Subject', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 47, no.4 (1975).

the interactions and disunities of different cultures and subcultures, while Linda Colley took into account the dialogue between 'Britishness' and 'regional attachments', while also emphasising that intense 'localism' in far-flung areas undermined a unifying sense of nationhood.[46] Overall, however, regions have been demonstratively of secondary importance. Indeed, Scottish, Irish and Welsh histories have raised questions about how national rather than regional identities, such as 'North British' and 'West British', were maintained in eras of English and imperial dominance.[47]

This, however, does not mean that regions have not been of great historical significance in Britain. Regional administrative and geographical units, such as parishes, boroughs, local authorities, and counties, have long been the most common way that British citizens and subjects have interacted with the state. Regions, variously defined, have been the focus of historical examination in both popular and academic local history, and debates have emerged around the best ways to make detailed local studies fit into wider national or thematic narratives, and undermine the 'hegemonic metropolitan stereotypes' of English

[46] Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles, A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Colley, *Britons*, 13-18, 308-14, 393. An expansive body of literature emerged on the 'Four Nations' in the 1990s and early 2000s, some of which includes discussions of the intersection of regions with nations, including Norman Davies, *The Isles. A History* (London: Macmillan, 1999), and Raphael Samuel, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain. Theatres of Memory* Volume II (London: Verso, 1998).
[47] The Acts of Union for Scotland and Ireland were passed in 1707 and 1800-1801 respectively. A good overview of the literature on Scotland is Richard J. Finlay, Review Article: 'New Britain, New Scotland, New History? The Impact of Devolution on the Development of Scottish Historiography', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.36, no.2 (2001).

historiography.[48] Regional economic traits, for example, rendered the East Riding of Yorkshire a definable region for David Neave, while Norman McCord emphasised interaction with the 'rest of Britain' as one of the traits which made the north-east a definable region.[49]

Although some of the English counties, Kent notable among them, bore resemblance either in name or shape to Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, the people of English counties, or indeed of any other regional unit, have rarely possessed strong enough beliefs in their cultural difference from the English nation, or a desire for economic independence, to stimulate genuine separatist movements.[50] Without the political impetus of nation making projects, then, inquiries into how a 'county' or broader 'regional' perspective may disrupt national narratives, and questions of broader regional identity, have been subservient to the 'nation' in British history. As if to reinforce this logic, in Europe where regionalist identities have often been placed in opposition to national cohesion, regional history is a lively field.[51] Nevertheless, recent studies into European identities have also shown that forms of local and regional belonging could translate into national symbols and metaphors. According to Alon Confino, regionalism was not merely a reflection of the

[48] Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction: An Agenda for English Local History', in Phythian-Adams ed., *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850. Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester University Press, 1993), xi, 4.
[49] Norman McCord, 'The Regional Identity of North-East England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', and D. Neave, 'The Identity of the East Riding of Yorkshire', in Royle ed. *Issues of Regional Identity.*
[50] A tentative exception to this may be Cornwall, with its links to the 'Celtic fringe'. James Vernon, 'Border Crossings: Cornwall and the English (Imagi)nation' in Geoffrey Cubitt ed. *Imagining Nations* (Manchester University Press, 1998).
[51] Marijana Jakimova, Miloš Řezník, Thomas Serrier, Matthias Mesenhöller, Anastasia Stouraiti and Kathryn Beresford, 'Storie regionali' in *Memoria e Ricerca,* vol. 22 (2006).

economic and social backwardness of peripheries, but a tool of integration into modern national projects.[52] Meanwhile, according to Celia Applegate, provincial loyalties in Germany underpinned powerful ideologies of national belonging, including the complex notion of *Heimat*, which broadly translates as 'homeland'.[53]

Although these theories have had relatively little impact on British scholarship, a significant interdisciplinary literature has tackled the ways that 'Englishness', in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was metaphorically represented through images of picturesque rural regions such as the Cotswolds, or the 'South Country'.[54] From a 'county' perspective, only James Vernon's account of Cornwall has shown how where specific forms of rugged masculinity, and links to the Celtic fringe, signified a liminal and 'pre-modern' identity which, imagined in an imperial framework, disrupted traditional narratives of metropolitan 'Englishness'.[55] Regional perspectives on nationhood in Britain, therefore, remains a relatively unexplored field.

iii. Culture and Identity in the Early Nineteenth Century

My focus on the possibilities of 'place' adds new elements to recent debates amongst historians about nation and identity making projects in the early nineteenth century. According to Linda Colley, these years were crucial in the redefinition of

[52] Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor.*
[53] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 3-4.
[54] Catherine Brace, 'Finding England Everywhere: Regional Identity and the Construction of National Identity, 1890-1940', *Ecumene* (1999); A. Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in R. Colls and P. Dodd eds., *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).
[55] James Vernon, 'Border Crossings'.

a new 'British' identity based upon religious inclusion, imperial supremacy and the abolition of slavery, which superseded identities forged by the experiences of prolonged wars with France, and the unifying force of Protestantism, in the long eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the widespread anti-Catholic protests of 1829 illustrated, according to Colley, just how important Protestantism remained, at certain moments, to how 'ordinary' Britain's viewed themselves and their place in the world.[56]

Colley's argument has been criticised for its relative negation of challenges to 'umbrella' notions of 'Britishness': conflicting forms of plebian patriotism, the ever growing influence of empire on British nationhood, and the quasi-colonial relationship between England and Ireland.[57] Moreover, the idea that the nation can be so solidly restructured, suggests fixity of identities that historians who adopt more flexible definitions of culture dispute. As Catherine Hall has demonstrated, 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' in this period were demonstratively discursive categories, constantly being reconfigured.[58] The legislation of 1832 momentarily crystalised hegemonic conceptions of British nationhood and citizenship as white, male and of the middling and upper classes.[59] However, such conceptions were 'always fragile', contingent upon complex shifting social hierarchies and

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[56] Colley, *Britons*, 351.
[57] E. P. Thompson, 'Britons: 'The Making of a Ruling Class'', *Dissent*, xl (1993), 377-82. Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race. Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 43.
[58] Catherine Hall, 'The Rule of Difference: Gender, Class and Empire in the Making of the 1832 Reform Acts', Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, Catherine Hall eds., *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 108.
[59] C.Hall, 'The Rule of Difference', 107; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes* (2002 edition), 19; James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, 1815-1867* (Cambridge, 1993), 39.

conceptions of 'difference', played out across the arenas of nation and empire, which determined who was included or excluded from the imagined community of the nation.[60]

The role of gender in nineteenth-century identities has also been a topic for debate. According to Hall, Davidoff and Tosh, the new gender roles of the post-war period, building on the ideologies of the mid to late eighteenth century, were tied up in notions of domesticity, work ethic, evangelical religion, and the dependence of women, children and servants on independent middle-class men, values that would become hegemonic between the 1830s to 1870s. The family and the household were crucial areas in which masculinities and femininities were formulated, expressed through the ideology of 'separate spheres'.[61] The masculine subject's definitional 'Others', however, could be found way beyond the 'domestic sphere'. He was defined against the dependent poor, who were all the more 'unmanned' by the harsh terms of the New Poor Law in 1834, colonised peoples, and also against the effeminate and spendthrift aristocracy.[62] In these ways, the figure of the

[60] C.Hall, 'The Rule of Difference', 109.
[61] John Tosh, *A Mans Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Yale University Press, 1999), 17-30; C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 27-28; Hall and Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, 'Introduction to new edition', xiv-xv. While the focus is on middle-class woman, Hall and Davidoff explored the operations of domestic ideology in both industrial Birmingham and rural Suffolk and Essex. For an analysis of 'gentry' women, mainly those of landed families, which argued they were not limited in their public lives by the cultural shifts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Amanda Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (Yale University Press, 1998). For the life cycle and experiences of gentry women, see Pamela Horn, *Ladies of the Manor. Wives and Daughters and Country House Society, 1830-1918* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997).
[62] Penelope Corfield, 'The Rivals: Landed and other Gentlemen', in Negley Harte and Roland Quinault eds., *Land and Society in Britain, 1700-1914: Essays in Honour of F.M.L. Thompson* (Manchester University Press, 1996), 11-14.

commercial, middle-class man became an embodiment of political citizenship and a cultural signifier of what it was to be an 'Englishman'.[63]

Tosh has argued that such accounts locate changes in gender notions in 'the economy, in elite politics, in religion', and on the assumption that the middling classes made their ascension from the cultural peripheries to cultural dominance between 1750 and the mid-nineteenth century.[64] My argument here does not challenge the significance of this transition as such, which has been the subject of much debate, research and qualification in the previous two decades, particularly in the light of the destabilization of the category of class.[65] Rather, I question the hegemony of these 'middle-class' values and suggest that new perspectives can be gained by taking into account the ways in which gender identities are dependent upon the kind of publics and regional cultures in which they are configured. In major industrial towns, such as Birmingham, the economic and cultural dominance of the traditional elite, while still significant, was indeed lessening.[66] In many other areas of England, however, including most of the county of Kent, the middling classes were still relatively small and the interests of agriculturalists and

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[63] See also Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class. The Political Representation of Class in Britain c1780-1840* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 389-95. For an exploration of middle-class urban masculinities in the eighteenth century, which emphasised the 'manly, rational love of liberty', see Wilson, *The Island Race,* 33-36. For an account of the evolution of competing conceptions of 'citizenship' and 'independence', shifting, broadly but not absolutely, from those based upon property and rank, to those based more upon the virtues of masculinity itself, between 1750 and 1832, see Matthew MacCormack, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester University Press, 1995).

[64] John Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850' in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen eds., *English Masculinities, 1660-1800* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd, 1999), 223.

[65] Davidoff and C.Hall, 'Introduction to New Edition', *Family Fortunes*, xxx-xxxi.

[66] C. Hall, *Civilising Subject,* 267-285. For the persistence of aristocratic influence in certain towns, see D.Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: The Aristocracy and the Towns*, 1774-1967 (Leicester University Press, 1980).

landowners, while not unchallenged, still dominated. The areas were geographically, economically and culturally significant. As Alun Howkins has observed, until at least 1850 the majority of the English population lived in rural rather than urban areas, and agriculture remained the largest single employer.[67]

The landowning aristocracy and gentry sat at the apex of the broadly defined 'landed interest', which also comprised 'the great body of the agricultural community, the farmers and labourers...and the blacksmiths, wheelwrights and publicans who provided them with services'.[68] The extensive writings of F.M.L Thompson, J.V.Beckett and Paul Langford, among others, have elaborated the economic underpinnings of landed power, and the struggle of the aristocracy and gentry to maintain it, in the face of growing economic and political opposition from the industrial middle classes, and their interaction with county society.[69]

Although little work has directly tackled masculinities amongst this diverse milieu, shared codes of behaviour and landscapes of knowledge among the broad 'landed interest' have been sporadically researched. The conduct of aristocratic men, for example, was greatly influenced in the early nineteenth century by new fashions of medievalism, 'romanticism' and chivalry.[70] The upper echelons of the landed

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[67] Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England. A Social History 1850-1925* (Harper Collins, 1991), 8-9.

[68] F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 4-5.

[69] Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991), 535; J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy of England, 1660-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society.*

[70] Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot. Chivalry and English Gentleman* (London: Yale, 1981), 21-23. According to John Tosh, this 'vogue' for fantasy violence was partially indicative of increased

interest shared knowledge of their position and its obligations, such as 'paternalist' duties.[71] According to Matthew Cragoe, 'paternalism' was 'the code of an elite who felt they were 'natural' leaders, impelled by a sense of duty to public service, and bound by the mores of the gentlemanly ethic to behave honestly and humanely towards their dependents'.[72] The notion, values and identity of the 'Country gentleman', and their 'rivals' has also borne much scrutiny: Penelope Corfield illustrated the competing notions of gentility, particularly those arising from commercial wealth, that challenged the relationship of social status to 'land' and 'blood' between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.[73]

This period, then, was undoubtedly one of great change, and of complex shifting power relations betwixt the middling classes and traditional elites, shifts which profoundly influenced gender roles, including 'English' masculinities. Challenges to certain aristocratic forms of masculine conduct, particularly 'licentious' behaviour and 'militaristic' practices such as duelling, have been subject to extensive literature.[74] Works on duelling treat the subject in a broad, European context and interprets its decline in the light of a long-term transition to a more

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detachment from real participation in war and fighting amongst elites, Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man', 222.

[71] David Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 271-3.

[72] Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy: The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1996), 2; Roberts *Paternalism in Early Victorian England,* 271-3.

[73] Corfield, 'The Rivals: Landed and Other Gentlemen'; see also David Castronovo, *The English Gentleman: Images and Ideals in Literature and Society* (NewYork: Ungar, 1987).

[74] Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850', 222. For an account of the rise of 'politeness' as a defining quality of manhood in the eighteenth century, as opposed to the 'unpolished' ways of soldiers, see Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 75-76. For a more generalised account of the reformation of manners see Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

'civilised' society and to the rise of evangelical religion, and as an indicator of increased bourgeois dominance.[75]

Change, however, was also contingent upon less teleological cultural factors, notably the far-reaching effects of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Indeed, analysis of patriotism and associated gender roles during the conflict from 1793 to 1815, in the wider, European context, has indicated the rising significance of certain forms of popular militaristic masculinities, which did not fit into the classic 'bourgeois' models of increasing 'civility'.[76] In the British case, the war certainly had a profound impact upon patriotism and related conceptions of identity. The years between 1801 and 1804, which became known as 'The Great Terror', were pivotal. In this short period, a great sense of threat filtered through to people at all levels of society, male and female, and military volunteers 'arose in an upsurge of popular patriotism'.[77] This was accompanied by huge amounts of propaganda and loyalist rhetoric, which Stuart Semmel has suggested was stimulated by an anxiety about the 'British' character and their ability to respond to the invasion threat.[78]

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[75] Ute Frevert, 'Honour and Middle-Class Culture: the History of the Duel in England and Germany', in Jurgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell eds., *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Munich: Deutchser Tachenbuck Verlas, 1988. First published in English by Berg, 1993); James Kelly, *'That Damn'd Thing Called Honour': Duelling in Ireland, 1570-1860* (Cork University Press, 1995); Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process. State Formation and Civilization with some notes and revisions by the author*, translated by Edmund Jephcott, vol.2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 24; Lawrence Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence in English Society, 1300-1980', *Past and Present,* vol.101 (1983), 29; Donna T Andrew, 'The Code of Honour and its Critics: The Opposition to Duelling in England, 1700-1850', *Social History,* vol. 5 (1980), 415.

[76] See, for example, Stefan Dudink and Karen Hagemann, 'Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Democratic Revolutions, 1750-1850' in Dudink, Hagemann and Tosh eds., *Masculinities in Politics and War. Gendering Modern History* (Manchester University Press, 2004).

[77] Tom Pocock, *The Terror Before Trafalgar. Nelson, Napoleon and the Secret War* (London: John Murray, 2003), 115.

[78] Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (Yale University Press, 2004).

Certain assertions of heroic British manliness were an important part of this response.[79]

These powerful images did not simply evaporate in favour of domesticity in the post-war period. Colley detected a decline in aristocratic, heroic and militaristic masculinities following the wartime period, despite the continuing celebration of the military as a symbol of patriotism. She nevertheless argues that the militaristic trappings of cultural institutions such as public schools and foxhunting indicated a reconfiguration rather than a complete rejection of the old ways.[80] With less attention to gender, the assumption that the popularity of the military plummeted after 1815 has been challenged by Scott Myerly who demonstrated forms of militarism actually increased in popularity after 1815 and assumed an increasingly pervasive position in popular and elite culture, while 'military virtues' provided a model for both individual conduct and the organisation of society.[81] The events and then the legacy of the Napoleonic wars, the literature, memoirs, plays, stories, flags and uniforms, formed a cultural vein right through to the middle of the nineteenth century, which influenced conceptions of gender roles and, indeed, continued to pervade the culture of rural and provincial Kent.[82]

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[79] Colley, *Britons,* 86, 320-321; Dudink and Hagemann, 'Masculinity in Politics and War'.
[80] Colley, *Britons,* 86, 187-193.
[81] Myerly, *British Military Spectacle,* 10-12, 170; On late nineteenth-century militarism and masculinities, argued to be a break with the unpopularity of the military and militarism in the early to mid nineteenth- century, see J.M.Mackenzie ed., *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester University Press, 1992).
[82] My thoughts on the importance of considering experiences and memories of the conflicts prior to 1815 in analysing the masculinities of men in the post-war era, have been discussed with Catriona Kennedy, Jane Rendall, Alan Forrest, and other members of the international research project on 'Nations, Borders, Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in European Memory, 1815-1945'. These topics are currently being explored by members of the project in a wider European

The specific 'Englishness' rather than 'Britishness' of this culture is a relatively undeveloped field. The nature of patriotism in this period – particularly the umbrella 'Britishness' described by Colley - has been contested by J.E. Cookson on the grounds that individuals, notably volunteers from the poorer sections of society, tended to be motivated by regional interests, which could conflict or collate with the national. When a sense of nationhood did loom, he argues, the loyalties of 'Irishness', 'Scottishness' or 'Englishness' tended to overrule that of 'Britishness'.[83] Much work, then, remains to be done on the specificities of region.

The interrelation of ideologies of 'Englishness' with perceptions of rural and agricultural England and the varying fortunes of the agricultural economy is a complex and highly contentious field, as are the long and short-term effects of technological development and change. Broadly speaking, economic historians such as Mingay and Chambers, argued that the effects of the 'agrarian revolution' (itself a controversial concept) were predominantly positive and necessary, and as well handled as possible by landlords and farmers. Historians of the 'left' including 'new rural historians' such as Reay, Howkins, and Wells, have focused upon the predominantly negative experiences of the agricultural workforce in this period.[84]

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context, and should challenge prevailing narratives of gender roles and re-examine links between citizenship, manhood and bearing arms.

[83] J.E.Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 12, 116-118.

[84] For overviews of debates on the impact of economic change in the countryside and provinces see, Mick Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England. Some Reflections on a Debate', in Mick Reed and Roger Wells eds., *Class, Conflict, and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (London: F. Cass, 1990); G.E.Mingay and J.Chambers, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880* (Batsford: London, 1966).

There are also inherent difficulties in understanding culture and forms of belonging amongst the rural poor, because of the lack of literary sources. Historians of English localities have tended to emphasise attachment to immediate environs, and a narrow knowledge of the wider world, while E.P. Thompson highlighted the vibrancy of plebian customs, and the fundamental divide between high and low culture.[85]

However, recent research into 'rural popular culture' has suggested both its dynamism, and possible connections with wider landscapes of knowledge concerning nationhood and perceptions of change, which, if not identical to those of elites, certainly shared some common ground with them. Ian Dyck, among others, has utilized the writings of William Cobbett, alongside ballads and poetry, as a lens through which to glimpse 'rural popular culture'. Cobbett's 'Englishness', although complex, was distinguished by attachment to certain aspects of the landscape and culture of the countryside, and comparisons with the negative attributes of London (the Great Wen.) In an era of devastating social and economic change, moreover, Cobbett's England and, according to Dyck, that of the labourers he spoke for, was interwoven with accounts of decline in the countryside, and perceptions of 'golden age' pasts, particularly those associated with prosperity among smallholders, and a peaceful 'yeoman' society.[86] The appellation 'yeoman'

[85] This is the stance of many recent historians of local and 'rural' history. For example, Charles Phythian Adams, 'Introduction: An Agenda for English Local History', Phythian-Adams ed., *Societies, Cultures and Kinship,* 4; E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common.*

[86] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture,* 138. See also, Raymond Williams, *Cobbett* (Oxford University Press, 1983), 55-56; Daniel Green, *Great Cobbett* (London: Hodder and Staunton, 1983), 'Introduction'; Peter Jones, 'Captain Swing and Rural Popular Culture' (University of Southampton PhD, 2004). Although I have not referred to his work directly in this thesis, similar

which, strictly speaking, meant those who owned and farmed their own land, conjured up resonant images, which were utilised by rich and poor and far exceeded purely economic and occupational categories. The term 'yeoman', indeed, evoked powerful and ambiguous landscapes of meaning that have made economic historians wary of analysing the category.[87]

Perceptions of 'golden ages', 'Old England', 'yeomen' and further ideological responses to cultural, economic and political change, can also be placed in the context of a wide literature on 'the age of romanticism'. Broadly speaking, 'romanticism' was a movement in art, literature and political discourse inspired partially by the rapid pace of societal change, and the tumultuous happenings in France after 1789, which rejected the dry 'rationality' of enlightenment thinking in favour of more emotive and, sometimes, fantastical responses.[88]

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analysis has been carried out on the poetry of Northamptonshire writer John Clare, another invaluable window into 'rural popular culture'. See John Lucas, 'Peasants and Outlaws: John Clare', in *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry 1688-1900* (London: Hogarth, 1993); Hugh Horton, Adam Phillips, and Geoffrey Summerfield, *John Clare in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[87] G. E. Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 10; F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*, 7-8. In earlier periods, the appellation 'yeoman' generally referred to those who held 'small landed estates', freeholders 'under the rank of a gentleman', those who owned and worked their own lands. By the late eighteenth century, however, the term was also used to describe tenant farmers. According to E Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Enlarged Edition, London: Cassell, 1894). 'Yeoman' were 'anciently a forty-shilling freeholder, and as such qualified to vote, and serve on juries. In more modern times it meant a farmer who cultivated his own freehold. Later still, an upper farmer, tenant or otherwise, is often called a yeoman'. Quoted in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <http://dictionary.oed.com>

[88] Nicolas Roe, 'Introduction', to Nicolas Roe ed., *'Romanticism'. An Oxford Guide* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 21-23; See also Cian Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

A large body of literary criticism deals with perceptions of a 'national' past in poetry, literature and art, encompassing artists as diverse as Wordsworth, Shelley, Blake and Sir Walter Scott. Alan Liu, for example, suggests that many 'romantic' poets saw history as an 'external force' like the Hegelian 'geist'. Wordsworth's evocations of the 'realities' of 'people, nation and church', rooted in the past', which were characteristic of his later work, were particularly influential.[89] Scott was also particularly popular with rich and poor, his stories published as novels and affordable chapbooks. His death in 1832 was marked with reverence in the Kentish press.[90] According to Billie Melman, Scott's stories of Celtic Lairds, and Saxon knights and 'yeomen', brought to life the ethnic historical origins of the 'English' and the 'Scottish', benignly placed within a British framework in which the Norman, Saxon and Celt could eventually be integrated.[91] His 'celebration of feudal values' also had resonance in a post-1789 world, idealising now lost societies based on feudal bonds rather than contract.[92]

Recent works by James Chandler and Peter Spence have traced the interconnectivity of 'romantic' ideologies and 'radical' politics. Spence, for example, has argued that 'radicalism' in the early nineteenth century became more

[89] Alan Lui, 'Wordsworth: The History in Imagination', in Duncan Wu ed. *'Romanticism': A Critical Reader* (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995), 86. For the importance of history in understanding specifically nations and nationhood see Silke Wenk, 'Gendered Representations of the Nation's Past and Future', in Blom et al eds., *Gendered Nations,* 63-67.
[90] Coleman O. Parsons, 'Sir Walter Scott: Yesterday and Today', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 116, no. 6 (1972), 450-457; *MJKA*, 25/9/1832; *KG* 27/9/1832.
[91] Billie Melman, 'Claiming the Nation's Past. The Reinvention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 26, no. 34 (1991), 575-595. According to Melman, the 'character of Conservative notions of 'Saxonism' and 'Englishness' is manifest in the construction of images of masculinity and femininity, public and private'; see also Jane Millgate, 'Making It New: Scott, Constable, Ballantyne, and the Publication of 'Ivanhoe', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* vol. 34 (1994).
[92] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 658.

associated with 'organic' imaginings of the nation and society, influenced by the thinking of Edmund Burke, than the egalitarianism of the 1790s.[93] These ideologies had implications for masculinities: Matthew MacCormack has argued that the 'romantic right' - the predominately Tory contingent of the landed gentry and aristocracy of the 1820s and 1830s - articulated varying conceptions of 'independence' and 'manliness', which emphasised Burkean social structure and the dependence of the masses upon the elite few who were capable of true, heroic manliness and independence.[94] Meanwhile, Peter Mandler has argued that 'romantic' visions of 'English' history had a more prominent place in popular conceptions of nationhood than most historians have believed, perpetuated by its vibrant commercial culture. Tory or 'Cobbettite' imaginings of 'Old England' and medievalism, however, are given short shrift in his discussion, which focuses upon the growing popularity of 'Merrie England', amongst the middle classes and potentially 'levelling' visions of pre-1688 England, the Tudors and 'good Queen Bess', and locates creative impulses within the rising middling classes, rather than the broad 'agricultural interest' and their economic fortunes.[95]

Finally, religion played a significant role in national thinking. The links between Protestantism and the 'forging' of British identities prior to 1837 has been explored, as discussed above, by Linda Colley, while John Wolffe has investigated how the

[93] James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (University of Chicago Press, 1998); Peter Spence, *The Birth of Romantic Radicalism* (Hampshire: Scolar Press, 1996), 8.
[94] Matthew MacCormack, *The Independent Man*, 172-173.
[95] Peter Mandler, "In the Olden Time': Romantic History and English National Identity', in Lawrence Brockliss and David Eastwood eds., *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c.1750-c.1850* (Manchester University Press, 1996), 78-92. See also Peter Mandler, *The Rise and Fall of the Stately Home* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997), 22-33.

different religious inheritances of 'Greater Britain's' four nations and their regions have led to denominationally-nuanced articulations of national identity. Rather that arguing for a sense of umbrella 'Britishness', Wolffe contends that national identities in the Anglican south-east were very different from those in Presbyterian Scotland, partly because of the integral role of religion in nation making projects.[96] Colley and Wolffe also contend that the passing of the Emancipation Bill in 1829, following the precedent-setting repeal of the Test and Corporation Act in 1828, was crucial in the reconfiguration of 'British' and religious identities. Nevertheless, while the Ultra-Tory reaction in high politics has been accounted for, the content of 'popular' campaigns surrounding Emancipation, including petitioning, Brunswick clubs, and mass meetings, have still 'never been properly investigated' on a nationwide scale.[97] The 'diversity' and 'pervasiveness' of anti-Catholicism in the post-1837 period, however, is now a well-researched phenomenon.[98] Meanwhile, the importance of evangelicalism, as a definitional force in 'English' identities, which arguably became culturally hegemonic as the nineteenth century progressed has been discussed by Davidoff and Hall.[99]

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[96] Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain.*

[97] G.I.T Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics 1820 to 1830* (Oxford University Press, 1964); G.I.T.Machin, 'Resistance to Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1828', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1979); Richard A. Gaunt, 'The Fourth Duke of Newcastle, the Ultra-Tories and the Opposition to Canning's Administration', *History,* vol. 88 (2003).

[98] John Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 2. D.G. Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford University Press, 1992). For the parliamentary passage of Catholic Emancipation, see Windy Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation. A Shake to Men's Minds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics 1828 – 1830*, 157-178; Geoffrey Best, 'Popular Protestantism in Victorian Great Britain', in Robert Robson ed., *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain : Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark* (London: Bell, 1967).

[99] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* part one; Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, 75-94; Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 35-37. The imperial dimensions of middle-class religion and gender roles has been explored in Clare Midgely, 'Anti-slavery and the Roots of Imperial Feminism' in Midgely ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester University Press, 1998).

iv. Political culture

A wide body of literature has informed my understanding of Kentish political culture. The foundations of detailed research into popular political culture in the early nineteenth century lay with the classic works of E.P. Thompson and, particularly for southern England, with Eric Hobsbawn and George Rudé. E.P. Thompson highlighted the social and cultural divide between 'patricians' and 'plebs', the decline of the 'moral economy' through which resistance had been possible, the exploitations carried out by the traditional aristocracy and capitalist bourgeoisie, and the realization of class consciousness of the latter, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[100] Meanwhile, in *Captain Swing,* Rudé and Hobsbawn located the causes of incendiarism and rioting in Kent and the rural south-east in 1830 in structural changes, which had driven labourers to desperation.[101] This provoked prolonged debates about class, diversity and political consciousness that are still being explored by 'new rural historians'.[102] Despite the emphasis on complexity, work on class experience has reiterated the existence of an overriding

[100] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1964); E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common.* See especially essays upon 'Patricians and Plebs', and 'The Moral Economy of the Crowd'.
[101] E. J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973. First published 1969).
[102] Barry Reay, *Rural Englands. Labouring lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Roger Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', in Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth eds., *Moral Economy and Popular Protest. Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*; See also E. P. Thompson, 'Moral Economy Revisited' in *Customs in Common.*

sense of 'them' and 'us' which undermined notions of social cohesion in rural England.[103]

These accounts make few links between the politics and culture of the rich and poor, much like some 'high political' histories of the period. J.D.C. Clark, for example, controversially asserted that the traditional, landed elite maintained a stranglehold on power, which was undermined only with the passing of the Test and Corporation Act in 1828.[104] Analyses of the 'politics of deference' have taken into account the middling and poorer classes in the 'provinces' in as far as they acquiesced to the continuing of aristocratic power, and participated in electoral corruption.[105] More recent research has challenged this approach, suggesting that the right to and action of voting was not the only way in which the individual became part of the political nation. Frank O'Gorman, for example, has demonstrated that complex electioneering techniques had to be followed through for the election to appear legitimate, even if elections were not contested at the polls.[106] Viewed in this light, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was demonstrably a period of

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[103] Barry Reay, *Microhistories. Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England 1800-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 154-155.
[104] J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1688 -1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[105] D.C.Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Political System* (Hassocks: Harvester Press 1976). Norman Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel. A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation 1830-1850* (New York: Northland, 1971. First published 1953).
[106] Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: the Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734-1832* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 17. O'Gorman confirms the picture suggested by John A. Phillips, who focused upon electoral behaviour in four English boroughs, including Maidstone. John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters, and Straights* (Princetown University Press, 1982). For the development of informal associational cultures see Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). For debates on deference and accountability see also Paul Langford, 'Property and 'Virtual Representation' in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1988), 83-115.

expanding political cultures. James Vernon's detailed analysis of developments in six diverse borough constituencies, including Lewes, county town of Sussex, illustrated the varied emergence of a wider political culture post 1815, which was located in the provincial press and mass meetings as well as the intricacies of electoral politics.[107]

The expanding political culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is often associated with the emergence of the 'public sphere'. Habermas's now archetypal Marxist-influenced model of the idealised bourgeois public sphere proposed a historically specific arena of communicative exchange of ideas by, and for the common good of, the newly ascendant capitalist middle class of north-western Europe (France, Germany, Britain) in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.[108] It was developed with reference to cultural institutions that have been predominantly perceived as features of an urban society, such as newspapers, coffee houses and improvement societies. Recent critics have argued that the very existence of such phenomena was part of the process of class-making and the consolidation of bourgeois power, engendered by conflict with alternative, but very much existing, publics such as that of the traditional aristocracy.[109] The gendered nature of competing public sphere(s), which were based on the peculiarities of customs and communities as well as religion, class, race and nationhood and a

[107] Vernon, *Politics and the People.*
[108] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Translated by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).
[109] Geoff Eley, 'Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century', in Craig Calhoun ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Massachusetts Institute Of Technology, 1992).

sense of who was part of 'progressive civilisation', has been highlighted by Jane Rendall.[110]

An important theme in this thesis is the complex ideological and structural shifts in key concepts, such as the 'nation', the 'constitution' and the 'people', and related languages of representation which, in various ways and at some stages, encompassed people of all social classes, if not of both genders.[111] As Patrick Joyce has demonstrated, notions of 'populism' intersected and challenged class ties: groups and individuals identified, arguably primarily, with forms of belonging such as 'the people', which could have class meanings but could also evoke 'moralistic' and/or 'universal' sets of meanings.[112] Joyce has also explored how nations are imagined in narrative forms.[113] I understand 'narrative' in a similar way to historians of the early nineteenth-century constitution: as an unconscious expression of collective interpretations of the world, and a group or individual's place within it, through which difference was then defined as the discourse was ordered in different ways.

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[110] Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Public Sphere', *Gender and History*, vol.11, no. 3 (1999), 475-488.

[111] Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Introduction' in *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge University Press, 1983); James Epstein, 'Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, vol. 122, no. 1 (1989), 75-6. The multiplicity of the rhetoric of one of these 'key concepts', 'Reform', is explored in Joanna Innes and Arthur Burns eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850,* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People, Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3. A more controversial work that proposes the 'middle-classes' only really came into existence as they were 'imagined' in the debates surrounding the Great Reform Act of 1832 is Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle-Class.*

[112] Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9-13. Joyce also developed the concept of the 'social imaginary', the ways in which society - local, regional or national - was imagined and understood, in *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England*, part 3 (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[113] Patrick Joyce, 'The Narrative Structure of Victorian Politics', in James Vernon ed., in *Re-reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 180.

These could be articulated in varying guises by opposing political factions to determine who should be included or excluded from the imagined 'nation'.[114]

A large body of literature has illustrated the dynamism of political culture in the English provinces. These have tended to focus on urban areas. According to Kathleen Wilson, the eighteenth century saw the rise of 'provincialism' in which political, commercial and religious 'interest groups', including those in the contrasting cities of Newcastle and Norwich, asserted their interests against the metropolitan state, representative of 'the landed interest'.[115] However, the 'landed interest' could form provincial groupings of their own. As J. Wordie has demonstrated, movements for the 'protection' of agricultural profits against the perceived conflicting interests of industrialists and foreign trade, were particularly influential in uniting the different groupings of the 'landed interest' in the English counties against what could be perceived to be an unsympathetic state.[116]

Most discussions of the 'county', as a unit of belonging, have been limited to the governing elite, the men whose administrative functions, as magistrates or sheriffs for example, brought them together on a regular basis as a 'county community'.[117]

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[114] For an overview of the importance of narrative forms in political identities, see Vernon 'Introduction' in Vernon ed., *Re-reading the Constitution.* 12-15; Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), xv.

[115] Wilson, *The Sense of the People,* ch. 2. For nineteenth-century provincialism see John Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1800* (Manchester University Press, 1977).

[116] J. R. Wordie, 'Perceptions and Reality: The Effects of the Corn Law Repeal in England, 1815-1906', in J. Wordie ed., *Agriculture and Politics in England 1815-1939* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 51; Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People,* 264-265.

[117] Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, 31.

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According to David Eastwood, the 'county community' had particular resonance with the gentry, whose estates tended to be located within the singular county, rather than the aristocracy, whose lands tended to be more 'widely scattered'.[118] Meanwhile, Paul Langford has suggested that the 'county', in some respects, increased in importance in the late eighteenth century, which saw a revival in the greater landed families' interest in 'county' affairs, after a lull in their participation around the mid century.[119] Eastwood has also emphasised the importance of the county press, in the early nineteenth century, as the arena in which the 'county', as a cultural entity, was most frequently represented'.[120] Alan Everitt, on the other hand, has stressed continuity through the ways in which the familial could overlap with the societal, asserting, not without controversy, that strong kinship bonds bound together the Kent county gentry, and also the farmers. These were established by the seventeenth century, and persisted into the nineteenth century.[121] This thesis, therefore, contends that counties and regions could have meaning as units of belonging, and are thus worthy of similar interrogation to that which has been applied to the 'nation' and the 'people'.

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[118] David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 94; Alan Everitt, *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion* (London: 1969), 8.

[119] Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman,* 403.

[120] Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870,* 93.

[121] Alan Everitt, *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion* (London: Historical Association, 1969), 8; Clive Holmes, 'The county community in Stuart Historiography', in *Journal of British Studies,* vol. 19 (1980), 72; Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), 390-1. Holmes criticised Everitt's assumptions about deference and his 'romanticised' image of 'communal corporatism'. He instead emphasised the interconnectivity of counties with London, personal links with the wider world and education. Clark argued that the gentry were consolidated as a 'county community' in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, after the disruption of the Civil War.

v. England's 'Others'

A recent strand in historical inquiry has explored how 'Britishness' and 'Englishness' were formulated through an imperial framework, which constructed various groups as racially and ethnically 'different'. Such notions were rigorously applied by those in power to poor and marginal groups 'at home', as well as in the empire, marking the difference of internal 'Others' in various ways, positing them as at more primitive stages of civilization, or inherently inferior. Susan Thorne, for example, has argued that representations of the domestic poor cannot be separated from Empire and the role of the English governing classes as colonizers. In her study of the foreign missionary movement, she suggests there was slippage between representations of the domestic poor (particularly the rural poor) and people of the colonies.[122] Meanwhile, according to John Marriott, ideas about India shaped notions of class and progress, although he contends that in the early part of the nineteenth century they were not used in a 'rigorous' way.[123]

'English' perceptions of Ireland and the Irish, as well as the Irish experience in this period have also been placed in an imperial framework. Roy Foster has suggested that the mixed fortunes of the Irish under the Union, particularly the 'bad fit' between imaginings of Catholic Irish nationhood and those of the British government and the Anglo-Irish, and the systematic colonisation and exploitation of the land, rendered

[122] Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 17. See also Alison Twells, ''Let us begin well at home': Class, Ethnicity and Christian Motherhood in the Writing of Hannah Kilham, 1774-1832', in Eileen Janes Yeo ed., *Radical Femininity. Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester University Press, 1998), 47.
[123] John Marriott, *The Other Empire. Metropole, India and Progress in the Colonial Imagination* (Manchester University Press, 1993).

Ireland a 'metropolitan colony'.[124] The role of 'race' in constructions of Irishness has been subjected to particular debate.[125] Foster has argued that the Irish presence in mid-nineteenth-century British life was an 'infinitely more complex, stratified and influential sector than is often realized'. He asserts that the Irish were presented as no more different in 'physiognomy' than English working-class people were to their elite observers, as illustrated by their portrayals in the cartoons in *Punch* magazine.[126] Luke Gibbon, on the other hand, has provided a more flexible stance for historians of identity, demonstrating that the dichotomy of black and white skins was not the 'only model of racism available to colonial regimes'. Rather, the complex place of Ireland and the Irish in the colonial order was constantly reconfigured with reference to many different models of difference. These included comparisons with Native Americans, India, conceptualisations of civilisation and progress, and notions of the ethnic and racial differences between the Saxon and the Celt.[127]

The interconnections between England and Ireland, in the early nineteenth century, have been best mapped in areas of high immigration, industrial cities and the north-east. Ideological links between anti-Catholicism and anti-Irishness, for example, have been researched with primary reference to these areas, as have the economic

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[124] R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in English and Irish History* (London: Penguin, 1995), 86; For the liminal experiences of Irish nationhood in the nineteenth century, see also D.G.Boyce, ''The Marginal Britons': The Irish', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd eds., *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920,* 230-53; Terrence McDonough ed., *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Politics and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005).

[125] Sheridan Gilley, 'English Attitudes to the Irish in England', 1780-1900 in C.Holmes ed., *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 81-83.

[126] R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*, 174.

[127] Luke Gibbon, 'Race against Time', in C. Hall ed., *Cultures of Empire*, 208.

underpinnings of anti-Irish sentiment. Nevertheless, these accounts have informed my interpretation of constructions of Irishness and the labouring poor in the south-east.[128] Patty Seleski argued that the invention of 'Irishness' in the early nineteenth century by Londoners was 'shaped decisively' by pressure immigrants placed upon the old Poor Law. [129] Mary Poovey has focused on Manchester, where high levels of Irish immigration were constructed as corrosive to the 'body politic', while cheap Irish Labour underpinned the capitalist economy.[130] Drawing upon Stuart Hall's definition of a modern crisis, Amy Martin has suggested that the response to Irish immigration in English cities in the early part of the Victorian period brought into focus an 'extended national crisis precipitated by the conjoined projects of colonialism and capitalist expansion'.[131]

Relatively little work has focused upon itinerant Irish labourers who travelled in large numbers to England in the years following the cessation of the wars with France for harvest work. My inquiry into itinerant labour in the south-east was informed primarily by Frank Neal's research into experiences of and conflict between English and Irish labourers in the north of England, particularly Liverpool, and seasonal migratory labour, mainly, but not exclusively, in the north. His

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[128] Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade*, 18-19, J.C.Belchem, 'Whiteness and the Liverpool-Irish', *Journal of British Studies,* vol. 44, no. 1 (2005), 146-52.
[129] Patti Seleski, 'Identity, Immigration and the State: Irish Immigrants and English Settlement in London, 1790-1846' in George Behlmer and Fred M. Leventhal eds., *Tradition, Nostalgia and Identity in Modern British Culture* (Stanford University Press, 2000), 18.
[130] Mary Poovey, 'Curing the Social Body in 1832: James Phillips Kay and the Irish in Manchester', *Gender and History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1993).
[131] Amy. E. Martin, 'Becoming a Race Apart. Representing Irish racial difference and the British working-class in Victorian critiques of capitalism', in Terrance McDonough ed., *Was Ireland a Colony?,* 192;
Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988).

findings have led him to conclude that 'Britain experienced periodical violence involving the Irish on one side and English, Scots and Welsh on the other', but that further research was required.[132] Neal has also mapped the relationship between the operation of and alterations to the Poor Law and the varying fortunes of Irish itinerant labourers in rural southern England.[133]

vi. Kent

This project builds upon the vast swathes of research carried out by historians of Kent over the past century and a half. The Kent Archaeological Society, founded in 1857, has published articles on the Kentish past from prehistory to the twentieth century in the journal *Archaeologia Cantiana.*[134] This body of work has been of extensive use in this project. In recent years, the Kent History Project, based at the University of Kent, has produced a useful series of books synthesising previous published work, unpublished theses, and fresh archival research, overviewing the economy, politics, religion and society of Kent from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries.[135]

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[132] Frank Neal, 'English-Irish Conflict in Rural England: the Case of the Irish Migrant', in John Belcham and Klaus Tenfelde eds., *Irish and Polish Migration in Comparative Perspective* (Essen: Fuldaer Verlag, 2003), 52.

[133] Frank Neal, 'The English Poor Law, the Irish Migrant and the Laws of Settlement and Removal, 1819-1879', in Boyce and Swift eds., *Problems and Perspectives in Irish History since 1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

[134] For an online index see <www.kentarchaeology.org.uk>

[135] Alan Armstrong ed., *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914* (Woodbridge: Kent County Council, 1995).
Nigel Yates, Robert Hume, and Paul Hastings eds., *Religion and Society in Kent, 1640-1914* (Woodbridge: Kent History Project, 1994).

Kent has also featured prominently in the work of historians of broader thematic issues, particularly of rural unrest. As well as the landmark *Captain Swing*, recent work by Barry Reay has focused on evidence from Kent, particularly the Blean area, for his analyses of labouring lives and the 'last labourers revolt'.[136] Roger Wells, meanwhile, has used evidence from Kent extensively while arguing that rural workers were proletarianised in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[137] Other historians who have used Kentish sources include Alan Everitt, whose research topics have included the changing landscape and the 'county' loyalties of dynasties of gentry and farming families, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.[138]

Detailed investigations into the politics of Kent have tended to focus on the period before 1815, notably Peter Clark's work on the 'county community' in the Great Rebellion, and John H. Phillips's analysis of electoral behaviour in Maidstone.[139] The post-war period, however, has been the subject of theses by Julia Hayward Andrews and P. L. Humphries. Using conventional forms of historical analysis, they have surveyed the interaction of national and county politics and important

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[136] Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*; Barry Reay, *Microhistories, Rural Englands. Labouring Lives in the Nineteenth Century*; and *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers: Rural Life and Protest in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1990).
[137] Roger Wells, 'Mr William Cobbett, Captain Swing and King William IV', *Agricultural History Review*, vol. 45, no.1 (1997); Wells, Popular Protest and Social Crime: The Evidence of Criminal Gangs in Rural Southern England 1790-1860, *Southern History*, vol.13 (1991); Wells, 'Rural Rebels in Southern England in the 1830s' in Clive Emsley and James Walvin eds., *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians: 1769-1860* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1985); Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', in Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth eds., *Moral Economy and Popular Protest. Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).
[138] A.C. Everitt, *Transformations and Traditions. Aspects of the Victorian Countryside* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1984).
[139] Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution;* Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England.*

themes, including Kent's Protestantism, Tory dominance and the 'type' of elite, landed men who held power in the county. They both noted the scale and passion of the anti-Catholic protests in 1828 and 1829, without interrogating its cultural impact in any detail.[140]

The 'manifestations' of national identity in Kent, over the long nineteenth century, have been the subject of a recent PhD thesis by Thomas Finucane. He tells the story of the fluctuating popularity of the Crown and Empire, surveys Kentish propaganda in wartime periods, suggests the importance of the French and Irish 'Other', and notes the uses of the 'Swanscombe legend', the tale of the 'Men of Kent' resisting the Conqueror in 1066, at various moments of political upheaval, including upon Penenden Heath in 1828. He fails, however, to suggest satisfactorily to whom this rhetoric had resonance, or point to any cultural or temporal specificities of meaning relating to being 'British', 'English' or 'Kentish' beyond dominant loyalism, Protestantism and the over-emphasised 'Swanscombe Legend'. While calling upon the theories of Anthony Smith to suggest that nationhood in Kent had 'ethno-symbolic traits', he does not relate his narrative to wider social, political or economic happenings and trends or, indeed, to many of the significant moments in the making of 'English' nationhood, including the Great Reform Act of 1832.[141] This account, therefore, leaves much room for further investigation into gender

[140] P L. Humphries, 'Kentish Politics and Public Opinion 1768-1832', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford (1981); Julia Hayward Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', unpublished MPhil thesis, University of London (1967).
[141] Thomas Finucane, 'Manifestations of National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Kent', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent (2004); Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991).

roles and subjectivities, conceptions of people and place, popular and elite culture and the links between them, and in demonstrating how regional conceptions of nationhood can contribute to, and even disrupt, current debates about identity.

3. Sources

i. Archival Sources

The greatest part of the research of this thesis was carried out, appropriately, at the two 'hubs' of the early nineteenth-century Kent 'county community': Maidstone and Canterbury.

The Centre for Kentish Studies in Maidstone (hereafter CKS) houses the papers of the Kentish families who operated at the core of these hubs, including those of Stanhope, Twisden (Hodges) and Knatchbull. The papers of Sir Edward Knatchbull, ninth baronet, have been referenced by historians for insights into local and governmental politics.[142] Nevertheless, the relatively neglected wealth of family correspondence, diaries and ephemera left by the baronet and the members of his wider family proved a particularly rich source for the study of county politics as well as of private and family life. I was able to bolster this archival opulence by surveying the published letters of Jane Austen and her circle. Austen, born in Hampshire, was related to the Austen family of Kent who had made their money in previous centuries in the cloth trade in the Weald.[143] She divided most of her life

[142] Carl Griffin, 'Policy on the Hoof: Sir Robert Peel, Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Trial of the Elham Machine Breakers, 1830', *Rural History*, vol. 15 no. 2, 1-22; Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Kentish Family* (London : Shenval Press, 1960).
[143] Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

between her home in Hampshire, and periods with family and friends in Kent. Her Kent-based relatives, the Knights, including her beloved niece, Fanny, were interrelated through friend and kinship networks to many other prominent families in the Kentish 'county community', including the Knatchbulls and the Finch-Hattons.[144]

The papers of the tenth Earl of Winchilsea, while less revelatory of 'private' life, contain many insights on county politics, and are housed in the Finch-Hatton collection at the Northamptonshire Record Office, because of the family's extensive estates in that area. Further official and family papers regarding electoral politics and county meetings were located at the Centre Kentish Studies and at the Canterbury Cathedral Archives. Correspondence between leading members of the 'county community' and the first Duke of Wellington, Prime Minister between 1828 and 1830, and Warden of the Cinque Ports from 1829 to 1852, was found in the Wellington Papers, part of the University of Southampton Special Collections.[145]

Additional family papers, including the Hodges diaries, were consulted at the British Library. The Home Office papers (hereafter HO), already established as a prime source for the 'Swing' unrest in Kent, were revisited for this purpose and for information on other moments of unrest, such as clashes between civilians and

[144] The most comprehensive published collection of Jane Austen's letters is Deirdre Le Faye ed., *Jane Austen's letters* (Oxford University Press, 1997. New edition).
[145] <http://www.archives.lib.soton.ac.uk/wellington.shtml>

troops in Canterbury in 1826.[146] Information about domestic unrest, Irish itinerant labour, the 'condition' of agriculture, and town life was also found in the British Parliamentary Sessions Papers at the University of London. The online resources of the Kent Archaeological Society, including the partial publication of tithe maps, and the Public Record Office online database of Canterbury Prerogative Court Wills, have been of use in linking names with occupations and property.[147]

ii. Printed Sources

My use of archival sources has been underpinned by an extensive survey of printed material from the period. One of the most prolific sources for this project was the county newspaper press. The most complete collections of the major papers for the period, *The Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser*, the *Maidstone Gazette and Kentish Courier*, the *Kent Gazette* and the *Kent Herald*, were consulted at the local history libraries in Maidstone and Canterbury. Although they have been drawn upon by historians of the county, there is still much work to be done on analysing these four vibrant newspapers as an invaluable window into the happenings and 'worldviews' of the period, supporting the argument that newspapers are 'the most important published primary source for the historian...'.[148] Additional Kentish newspapers, such as the *Kentish Chronicle*, the metropolitan press, and other provincial newspapers for the period were consulted at the British Newspaper

[146] Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*.
[147] <www.kentarchaeology.org.uk >; <www.pro.org.uk>.
[148] John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (Harlow: Longman, 2000. Third edition), 42.

Library, Colindale. For *The Times*, I consulted the online database.[149] Pamphlet literature on topics including Catholic Emancipation, the Poor Laws and Ireland was consulted in the British Library and in the Wellington Papers (pamphlet collection).

One of the most prominent names in political polemic in the period, was William Cobbett. Cobbett's various writings formed a particular valuable source for this thesis. He never lived in Kent, but he travelled and spoke in the county extensively, had friends among the farmers and county elite, and attended county meetings.[150]

I carried out an extensive survey of depictions of Kent in fiction, travel literature and poetry. Three of the most prolific literary chroniclers of Kent in the 1830s were George Robert Gleig, Richard Barham and Charles Dickens. Between them, these three writers embraced many of the distinctive literary forms of the period: Dickens, who was then a struggling journalist, spent his happier childhood years in Chatham. According to biographers, his memories were divided between the squalor of the post-war naval base and its military throngs, and the 'rural idyll' of the 'golden corn' in the fields beyond.[151] Scottish born Gleig was former military man, historian, and sometime teller of moral tales set in rural Kent, where he lived

[149] <www.galegroup.com>

[150] Important works by Cobbett included the Journal *Cobbett's Political Register*, which was published under various titles from 1802 until his death in 1835; *Rural Rides*, 1823-1830, a new edition with notes by Pitt Cobbett. 2 vols. (London: Reeves and Turner, 1908); *Facts for the 'Men of Kent'* (London, 1828); *Advice to young men and, incidentally, to young women in the middle and higher ranks of life. In a series of letters addressed to a youth, a bachelor, a lover, a husband, a citizen or a subject* (London, circa 1830); *A History of the Protestant Reformation, in England and Ireland* (London: Charles Clavel, 1824-25).

[151] Dickens childhood experiences in Kent are evoked in Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), 21-25.

as a clergyman. *The Country Curate*, (1831) and *The Chronicles of Waltham*, (1835), both contained semi-autobiographical and highly moralistic accounts of 'everyday' country life in the tiny hamlet of Waltham, near Sandwich.[152] Richard Barham was of a minor branch of an ancient Kentish family, and lived most of the period in London, a canon of St Paul's. An acquaintance of Scott and Southey, he found literary success in 1837 when *Bentley's Miscellany* started to publish *The Ingoldsby Legends* in serial form. This whimsical collection of poetry and prose was set mainly in a mythical, mediaeval Kent of abbeys, castles, ghosts and smugglers.[153] Other invaluable printed sources included the memoirs and autobiographies of Robert Cowton, who grew up in Canterbury in the 1820s and 1830s before embarking on a career as a Methodist minister, and farmer John Mockett.[154]

My particular focus on political identities has rendered my use of visual sources as secondary to that of textual sources. However, I have surveyed a small sample of Kentish landscape art in the period, and used visual representations of Kentish

[152] George Robert Gleig, *The Chronicles of Waltham* (Paris: A and W Gagliani, 1835); *The Country Curate* (London: Henry Colburnand Richard Bentley, 1830). For autobiographical reflections, see G.R.Gleig, *Personal Reminiscences of the First Duke of Wellington ed.* Mary E. Gleig (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1904).
[153] For the life of Richard Barham see R.H.D. Barham, 'Memoir' in R.H.Barham, *The Ingoldsby Legends; or, Mirth and Marvels, by Thomas Ingoldsby, Esquire* (London: Richard Bentley, 1840).
[154] Robert Cowton, *Passages from the Autobiography of a 'Man of Kent' ed.* R. Fitzroy Stanley (London: Whittingham and Wilkins, 1866); John Mockett, *Mockett's Journal. A collection of interesting matters, relating to remarkable personages, ancient buildings, manners and customs, etc., beginning from the year 50, etc.* (Canterbury, 1836).

people where available, my most valuable source being the print room at the British Library, and Dorothy George's multi-volume catalogue.[155]

4. Aims and Methods

I am a feminist, cultural historian.[156] My approaches to history have been nurtured in the Departments of History at the University of York, and University College London, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and are influenced by the teaching of historians such as Jane Rendall, Joanna De Groot and Catherine Hall. I adopted my stance, initially through a desire to understand the marginal place of women in conventional empiricist accounts of history, and how the recording and interpretation of the past has been dominated by the voices of those in power, notably white men of the middling and upper classes. Developing this viewpoint, I became interested in how identities in general, and the categories of gender, class race and ethnicity, were defined through historically specific landscapes of knowledge and power, in both past and present societies.[157] I have also been influenced by postcolonial theory, and write with an appreciation of how the histories of the modern West, including that of the constituent nations of Great Britain, have been shaped by their participation in imperial projects, and by

[155] M. Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in The British Museum*, vol. 7-11 (London: The British Museum, 1940-60).
[156] For a definition of culture in this context, see C.Hall, 'Introduction' in Hall ed., *Cultures of Empire*, 11. For a foundation text on the evolution of cultural history, see Lynn Hunt ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
[157] For a commentary on the usefulness of post-structural approaches to history, which emphasises the need to understand the multiplicity of meanings attributed to language within any culture, see Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 123.

encounters with colonised people.[158] I have thus pursued the aims and methods adopted in this thesis, because of a belief in their academic, social and political value, as well as their contemporary resonance in a society constantly confronting inequality and questions of 'inclusion and exclusion'. My aims, however, were also more specific: in suggesting new perspectives on 'English' masculinities at a moment of domestic unrest, imperial expansion and contestations over political citizenship, I participate in contemporary debates about the historical formation of discourses of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness', which were utilised to wield power at 'home' and 'abroad'.[159]

My main method of research was close textual analysis. Each source has been evaluated, where possible, in the light of comparable evidence, seeking to establish its authenticity and typicality and gain as accurate a picture as possible through the amassing of similar writings. I comment on this from my own historical and cultural perspective, with the belief that, in the words of Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, 'external reality also has the power to impose itself on the mind; past realities remain in records that historians are trained to interpret...'. Thus, one can gain a form of 'objectivity' in the sense of 'honest investigation, open processes of

[158] For an overview, see Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, 'Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda', in Cooper and Stoler eds., *Tensions of Empire*. For a discussion of the postcolonial 'moment', and the cultural uncertainties of the post-imperial era, see C.Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 6.

[159] This viewpoint has also been informed by my attendance at the Institute of Historical Research seminar group, 'Reconfiguring the British: Nation, Empire, World, 1600-1900'.

research' and by engaging in 'public discussions on the meaning of historical facts...'.[160]

No cultural form is a free-floating entity. The emphasis, throughout this thesis, is on historical context. Fuelled by this belief, I fully appreciate the value of alternative approaches to history and of the 'plurality of historical interpretations'.[161] Building upon the research and analysis of previous generations of historians, my conclusions have been informed by scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, including revisionist and classical Marxists such as E.P.Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, and empiricists, such as F.M.L. Thompson and Gordon Mingay.

5. Themes and Overview

The main themes of this thesis – notions of gender, nationhood, and their interrelation with representations of the county of Kent in the specific historical circumstances of the years following 1815 - are explored in each of the six following chapters.

Chapter two interrogates the social, geographic, economic and cultural specificities of Kent in the early nineteenth century: its diversity of landscapes, the dominance

[160] Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (London: Norton, 1994), 10. For an argument in favour of reminding the reader of the position from which we interpret history, see Keith Jenkins, *On 'What is history?': From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London: Routledge, 1995), 13.
[161] Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* 133.

of the 'agricultural interest', population increases and structural changes in the countryside, and the far reaching effects of the Napoleonic wars. The second half deals with how these factors impinged upon a 'sense' of time and place, analysing the cultural impulses that created imaginings of 'Old England' and 'golden ages', often generically 'English' perceptions articulated from a regional perspective, rather than specifically 'Kentish'. I also consider the effects of the Napoleonic wars, which emphasised Kent and its people's legacy as 'defenders of the nation', and raised questions about their identities in a time of 'peace'.

Chapter three builds on the conclusions of the previous chapter, interrogating dominant representations of Kent in literature and politics. These evoked the 'county' as the 'Garden of England' and 'Vanguard of Liberty', which sustained the hegemony of the 'landed interest', and informed challenges from the pens of their detractors, such as William Cobbett. I analyse the masculine figures of the 'Kentish yeomen' and the 'Men of Kent', as emblematic of the agricultural opulence and warlike nature of the region, and the peculiar assertiveness and martial prowess of its men, despite constant fears of corruption and decline. 'Men of Kent' and 'yeomen' also evoked 'qualities' of Kentish masculinity, such as the ability to defend and work the land, or, at least, a claim upon this ability, through land ownership. I start to explore the evolution of these notions in political rhetoric, particularly their prevalent usage in wartime propaganda. Attention is also given to the subservient image of the 'Maids of Kent', indicative of women's perceived peripheral role in politics, and in conceptions of national belonging.

Chapter four considers in more detail to whom, how and when the 'county' had meaning, through exploring the fortunes of the Kent 'county community'. I argue that the 'county' took on new significance as a form of belonging in the later 1820s, through the evolution of county-orientated institutions such as the press and county meetings, and through the vibrant political culture stimulated by campaigns surrounding Catholic Emancipation and 'Reform'. These fuelled hierarchical conceptions of the 'county', inflected along the lines of class and gender, but which could, on occasions, become widely inclusive, indicative of an expanding 'public sphere'. This chapter also further populates the 'county community', considering the men who sat at the apex of power, such as Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Earl of Winchilsea, and the financial, cultural and political underpinnings of their status. I look at their interaction with various other social groups, including tenant farmers and the labouring poor, considering the links, and barriers, between the culture and forms of belonging of various social groupings, and of men and women.

Chapter five opens with an analysis of the greatest of the Kent county meetings, the anti-Catholic Penenden Heath Meeting of 1828. It explores further the notion of the 'county on display', introduced in chapter four. Its main focus, however, is on the ways that the language and rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' were an important part of such 'social imaginings'. The Earl of Winchilsea and his anti-Catholic Brunswick Society tapped in to 'rural popular culture', drawing upon a common landscape of anti-Catholicism and anti-Irishness, and knowledge of the 'Men of Kent' as

defenders of the nation, as well as a shared drinking culture, to unite people of all backgrounds, albeit briefly, at this landmark event. I then demonstrate how the 'Men of Kent', established as a hegemonic, yet constantly contested, notion of English masculinity on Penenden Heath, were articulated and challenged through the era of the 'Swing' riots and 'Reform', and then eclipsed by more generic conceptions of agrarian 'Englishness' by the later 1830s.

Chapter six emphasises further the racial, ethnic and religious dimensions of regional perspectives upon nationhood in Kent. The Irish were an increasingly visible presence in provincial south-east England in the 1820s and early 1830s, as the Catholic Association and unrest in the 'Emerald Isle', and itinerate Irish labourers in south-east England, became a focus of the Kentish press, evangelical associations and, once the Catholic Emancipation Bill was placed firmly upon the parliamentary agenda in 1828, of anti-Catholic political clubs. Increased competition for labour meant that anti-Irishness and anti-Catholicism were rife among all levels of society, and 'differences' between the English and the Irish became a matter for public debate. Kentish 'Englishness' was thus delineated through discourses of class, religion, ethnicity and race and posited the subversive and subservient Irish Catholic as a particularly resonant 'Other' to the Protestant, 'loyal, brave and free 'Men of Kent''. At the same time, unrest and poverty in Ireland were evoked metaphorically to illustrate fears of revolution and decline in agrarian England, and were an important part of cultural responses amongst elite groups to the 'Captain Swing' riots.

Finally, chapter seven draws together the themes of the previous chapters - a 'sense of time and place', the importance of militarism and agrarianism, the significance of the 'county community' and the campaigns surrounding Catholic emancipation and 'Reform', and the Irish 'Other', – to analyse the subjectivities of five 'Men of Kent'. The emphasis here is on the conflicts between the demands of the Kentish 'county community', dominated by the masculinities of 'Men of Kent' and 'yeomen', and the pulls of family life, military and political careers, and deeply felt evangelical religion. It concludes that being a 'Man of Kent', really could influence individuals' behaviour and self-perceptions, but that lived experiences, and textually-constructed identities, are always complex and often contested.

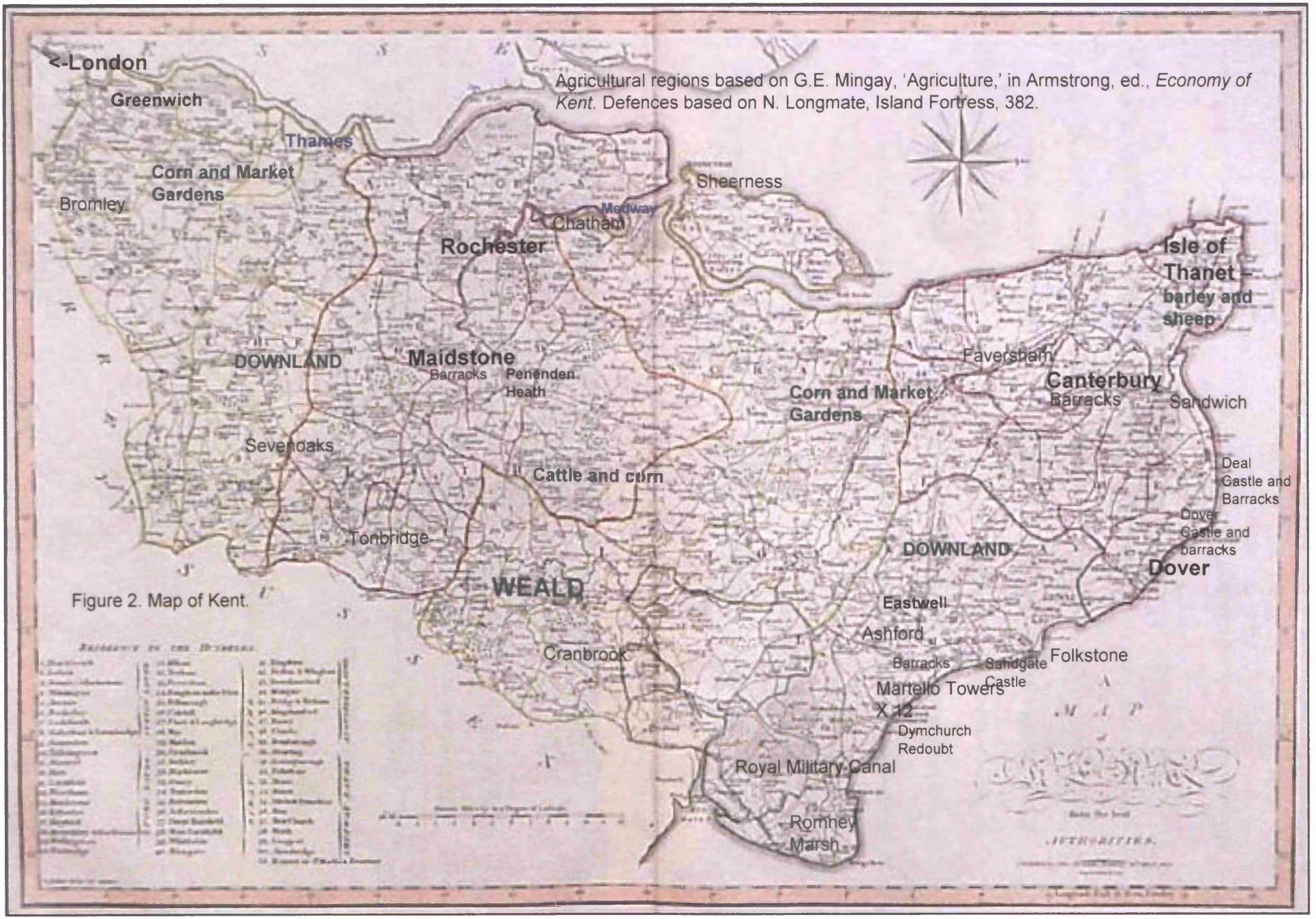

Figure 2. Map of Kent.

Chapter Two: A 'Sense' of Time and Place: People, Landscape and Change, 1815-1837

1. Introduction

In the years following 1815, a strong identity was associated with the county of Kent. Kent was the 'Garden of England' and the 'Vanguard of Liberty'. It was defined by its predominantly agricultural economy, and its militarily strategic position.

This chapter explores the contexts behind these conceptions of 'place' in Kent. Identities are contingent upon their spatial and historical contexts, and upon a flexible 'sense of place', defined by constantly changing 'networks of social relations'. Imaginings of place are also impinged upon by a 'sense of time'.[1] Indeed, conceptions of place in Kent in the years following 1815 were contingent upon perceptions of two, very different, but apparently seismic happenings that imbued its agrarian attributes and strategic location with particular significance: the great changes in the structures of agrarian society during the previous few decades, and the Napoleonic wars. Such huge 'events' impacted on experiences and landscapes in many different ways, but on such a scale that 'time', as well as 'place', became extraordinarily visible. Conceptions of the 'county', and related manifestations of national identity, were conceived through this shifting and subjective framework of 'time and place'.

[1] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 6, 120-121.

The first section will outline the basic geographical, economic and social makeup of the county of Kent and its location, placing it in relation to the rest of Britain and the wider world. A second section will consider the ways in which social and economic change, and the interrelated cultural climate, impacted on various groups of people.

2. A 'Sense of Place': People and Landscape

i. Landscape and Agriculture

Kent, in the nineteenth century, as it remains in the twenty-first, was a county of varied landscapes. A peninsular (less defined than Cornwall) coastline and the Thames delineated its boundaries to the south-east and north.[2] On the west, the borders with Surrey and East Sussex marked no major change in landscape between one county and the other. The boundary sliced, more or less arbitrarily, through the four main agricultural regions of the south-east, intersecting the corn, wheat, and market garden area of Kent and Surrey just south of London, the North Downs, the sandstone belt below, and the Weald.[3] Around 1557 square statute miles in size, Kent was a large county, similar in size to Hampshire, Essex and Somerset.[4]

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[2] Kent's coastline was over 140 miles long, including the 'open seaboard and the estuaries of the Thames and the Medway'. Robin Craig and John Whyman, 'Kent and the sea', in Armstrong ed., *The Economy of Kent*, 161.

[3] For a more detailed overview of the geography and agricultural regions of Kent, see George Henry Garrad, *A Survey of the Agriculture of Kent* (London: Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1954), 18-29; William Marshall, *The Review and Abstract of the County Reports to the Board of Agriculture, vol. 2, Southern Counties, 1815* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1968), 412.

[4] PP 1831, Abstract of Answers and Returns under the Population Act, 269-270. Alan Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape of Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 92 (1976), 2. The only larger English counties were Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Devon, Norfolk, Northumberland and Lancashire.

Kent was a predominantly rural county, but its terrains, and agriculture, were diverse. It led the country in its famous hop yield, and in 1835 produced 48% of the national total. Yet hops and market gardens, which had emerged and flourished over the past century, in response to the ever-growing demands of London, never covered more than 10% of the land.[5] Overall, the soils of Kent were considered of a very mixed quality. The 'western' areas, which encompassed the relatively infertile Weald, were mainly grazing land, and far less abundant and affluent than the east.[6]

Thus, as Gordon Mingay observed, the well-known phrase, 'Garden of England' concealed the existence of far larger areas of infertile soil than in many other English counties. A 'large proportion' was 'taken up by woodland, windswept commons, bleak downland and desolate marshes'.[7] Indeed, if area covered was to be taken into account, woodland was a far more definitional aspect of the Kentish landscape than any of its forms of agriculture.[8] This was also a changing picture. Although Kent had not been altered by enclosure in the eighteenth century - much of the land having been in private hands for at least two centuries prior - many of the market gardens were relatively new, growing industries, notably the hops.[9] Boundaries and land usage were also transient. The fortunes of smaller farmers fluctuated and farms were bought, sold, or lost. The shapes of the estates of large

[5] Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', 4-5.
[6] Garrad, *Survey*, 1.
[7] Gordon Mingay, 'Agriculture' in Armstrong ed., *Economy of Kent, 1640-1914*, 53.
[8] Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', 13-15; Marshall, *Board of Agriculture*, 430; Garrad, *Survey*, 95.
[9] Garrad, *Survey*, 95; Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', 5.

landowners also changed, as did the ways in which they, and their tenants, used the land.[10]

Amongst the features of Kent that could constitute a garden, however, were many large parklands, which were to be found around the numerous large, aristocratic houses, such as Mote Park, Eastwell Park, Provender, Chevening, Penshurst Place, Hever Castle, Leeds Castle and Knole.[11] As F.M.L. Thomson has demonstrated, Kent was consistently one of the most densely settled counties in terms of aristocratic country seats, a phenomenon partially explained by its proximity to London.[12] In addition to the estates owned by the church, understandably large in the diocese of the Archbishop of Canterbury, only just over a third of the working land of the county was in the hands of smaller landowners, the lesser gentry, and owner-occupiers, and the rest was farmed by tenants.[13] However, the county was not purely in the hands of large landowners: in proportion of land held, Kent was far down the list in terms of the domination of 'great estates'.[14] Along with near-neighbours, Essex and Surrey, there were many slightly smaller landholders: the greater gentry, those with estates of 300-1000 acres, had a particular strong

[10] A.M. Everitt, *Transformations and Traditions: Aspects of the Victorian Countryside* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1982), 7-8.
[11] A listing of over thirty of the country estates of which Kent was then 'proud' can be found in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 1 (1857), 17.
[12] F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society,* 29-30, Mingay, 'Agriculture' in Armstrong ed., *Economy of Kent, 1640-1914.*
[13] Many estates in Kent were held by the churches of Canterbury and Rochester, and by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Marshall, *Board of Agriculture,* 428; F.M.L Thompson, *English Landed Society*, 117.
[14] F.M.L. Thompson places Kent 34th out of 39 on his table demonstrating 'the proportion of total area (excluding waste) occupied estates which, in aggregate, exceeded 10,000 acres', F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society,* 32.

showing in Kent owning 18% of the land.[15] Smaller owner-occupiers, and so-called 'open parishes', were commoner in the west and Weald.[16]

ii. Population, Industry and Religion

As has been implied, Kent had its urban areas. Inland, the county was dotted with numerous small-to-medium-sized market towns, including the ancient cathedral cities of Rochester and Canterbury, the bustling county town of Maidstone, and smaller centres such as Sevenoaks, Ashford, and Faversham. With little large-scale industry, their economies and communities were deeply interlinked with that of the surrounding countryside. Aside from election days, or the numerous politically-motivated gatherings, Canterbury and Maidstone were bustling on the market days that brought the farmers in from the fields. Tradesmen were reliant upon custom from the farming tenants and landlords, while farmers benefited in numerous ways from commercial centres. John Cramp, farmer of the Isle of Thanet, commented in 1833 that he and other agriculturalists in the area surrounding Margate and Ramsgate relied upon buyers and travellers to the towns to 'furnish' them with manure.[17] Villages, too, acted as 'cores' for their rural 'peripheries'.[18] This picture,

[15] F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*, 116-8.
[16] For an analysis of power and economic networks in English villages, distinguishing between 'closed' and 'open' villages (a model that, broadly speaking, discerns whether land and power is in the hands of many owners, or few large landowners) see Brian Short, 'The Evolution of Contrast Communities within Rural England', in Short ed., *The English Rural Community* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
The model of open and closed villages, and its effectiveness in analysing social relations, has been challenged by Roger Wells, 'Rejoinder', in Reed and Wells eds., *Class, Conflict and Social Protest in the English Countryside 1700-1980* (London: F. Cass, 1990), 27; see also Dennis Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).
[17] PP 1833, Special Commission on Agriculture, 250.

albeit a rather generalized one, was fairly typical of much of England at the time, where market towns outnumbered industrial centres, and small scale, workshop trades were prevalent, except in the textile and manufacturing districts of the north and west. This network of small and medium sized urban centres, and their agricultural hinterlands, which often paid no regard to county borders, distinguished, at least geographically, most of Kent, and indeed, southern England.[19]

In the north-western parts of the county, Deptford, Greenwich, and Woolwich and their neighbours, which lined the Thames, were being integrated into London's increasingly sprawling hinterland.[20] The growth of population, dockyards and manufacturing industries was consistently strongest in this part of Kent.[21] In 1831, large munitions, chemical and machine works operated in the Deptford, Dartford

[18] For the importance of networks between town and country in rural southern England and elsewhere, see Reay, *Rural Englands*, 19; Everitt, *Transformations and Traditions,* 4. For the town activities of the 'middle rank of county society....minor gentry and larger farmers', see Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England,* 31; A recent book on Irish regional identities has adopted Immanuel Wallerstein's concept of the shifting nature of economically dominant cores, peripheries and semi-peripheries under capitalist development. Glenn Hooper and Leon Litvak eds., *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century: Regional Identity* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

[19] In 1852, James Caird divided Britain into two regions - the northwest uplands with their scattered homesteads, and the south-east Lowlands, corn lands, with villages. Much of Kent was 'typical' of the latter. This picture is backed up by R.F. Foster, who observed that, with the exception of London and its immediate environs and the Northern industry and textile centres, England was characterised as a country of 'small and few urban communities, far from all of which were industrial in character'. R. F. Foster, *The Politics of County Power. Wellington and the Hampshire Gentlemen, 1820-1852* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 3.

[20] Everitt, *'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape'*, 2.

[21] PP 1831, Population Act, 283. Of males over 20 years of age employed in 'manufactures', all were located in northwest Kent apart from the paper makers and hop-baggers etc. of Maidstone; Crayford contained 124 Calico printers; Dartford employed 40 in making machinery and gunpowder; in Deptford, an unspecified number were employed in chemical preparations and colouring; at Greenwich there were 85 machinery makers and 23 were employed in the 'manufacture of combs'.

and Greenwich areas.[22] It should not be forgotten that William Blake's 'dark satanic mills' were not inspired by sights in Manchester, or Birmingham, but in Lambeth, Surrey, not far over an indistinguishable border with Kent.[23] This was also the most densely populated area of the county. By 1800 the population of Deptford and Greenwich, at 14, 339, dwarfed that of Canterbury, with roughly 9000 inhabitants.[24] These areas continued to grow in population at a faster rate than the rest of the county. Because of the London encroachment, the boundaries of Kent shifted on several occasions in the nineteenth century. These areas were excluded from the administrative county in 1837.[25] Bromley, not of course an industrial area but an emerging suburb, and Dartford thereafter marked the 'western extremities'.[26] This change, while determined by centralised administrative policies, also effectively removed areas that no longer fitted into imaginings of Kent: Woolwich and Deptford had no place in the 'garden of England', although, ironically, it was partially the demands of the London market that had shaped the cultivated parts of the remaining county in such a way that it resembled a garden.

Those great and much-studied phenomena of the nineteenth century, population growth, urbanisation and industrialization, were most identifiable in the London

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[22] PP 1831, Population Act, 283.
[23] William Blake, *Jerusalem*, written circa 1804. Peter Ackroyd, *Blake* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), 128-30.
[24] PP 1800, Population Act, 158.
[25] In 1889, the administrative county of Kent was created, in which the highly populous territory of Lewisham, Greenwich in Deptford was transferred to the new county of London. For details see Armstrong, 'Population: 1831-1914', in Armstrong ed., *Economy of Kent, 1640-1914*, 30-31. *Victoria County History of Kent*, vol. 3 (London: Victoria County History, 1932), 356.
[26] For a discussion of the rise of 'suburbia' in this part of Kent, see M.C. Carr, 'The development and Character of the Metropolitan Suburb: Bexley, Kent', 212-267, and J. M. Rawcliffe, 'Bromley: Kentish Market Town to London Suburb, 1841-1881', 28-84 in F.M.L. Thompson ed., *The Rise of Suburbia* (Leicester University Press, 1982); Armstrong, *'Population: 1831 – 1914'*, 30-31.

spread. Populations, however, grew everywhere in this period.[27] Indeed, Mary Dobson, in her analysis of demography in Kent, noted that the populations of rural villages and country towns grew proportionately faster in the first quarter of the century.[28] Roughly in line with the national average, the population of Kent doubled between 1788 and 1841.[29] The growth was not so large, of course, as in the industrial cities of the north, but between 1801 and 1831 alone, the number of listed occupants increased from 307,624 to 479,155. The increase was proportionately greater than that of Hampshire, a county of slightly larger geographical size, variable agrarian economy, and containing the thriving port of Southampton, the mediaeval city of Winchester and several flourishing market towns, including Basingstoke and Andover, but without Kent's highly populous London hinterland.[30] Another anomaly in Kent's population growth was the boost that it temporarily enjoyed during the wartime period because of its militarily strategic location.[31]

Outside of the London spread, however, industry in Kent was predominantly small-scale and, in many cases, getting smaller. Notably, the cloth industry, once flourishing on the Weald, had experienced decline in the early eighteenth century, before even the competition from the far more industrialised north kicked in. The largest single employers were in Maidstone, where hop bags and paper were manufactured. Paper was the one industry in which provincial Kent led the

[27] Much of this paragraph is based upon, Mary Dobson, 'Population: 1640-1831', and Alan Armstrong 'Population: 1831 – 1914', in Armstrong ed., *The Economy of Kent: 1640 – 1914* (Woodbridge: Kent County Council, 1995).
[28] Dobson, 'Population: 1640-1831', 28.
[29] Armstrong, 'Population: 1831 – 1914', 31.
[30] Population of Kent in 1800 was 307,624, in 1831, 479,155. In Hampshire in 1800 it was 219,650, and in 1831, 314,280. PP 1800, Population Act, 158, 327; PP 1831, Population Act, 280, 581.
[31] Armstrong, 'Population: 1831 – 1914', 31.

country. [32] In 1826 there were six paper mills in Maidstone.[33] By 1839, this had increased to 10 mills.[34] Brewing had a powerful presence in many of the Kentish towns, and brewing families such as the Cobbs of Margate and the Mackesons of Hythe, held positions of great importance in these communities.[35]

The towns also saw the greatest religious diversity. In 1829, according to a survey by the Deputy Sheriff, 'old' forms of dissent, notably Methodists, Baptists, Independents and 'Wesleyans', thrived in the more flourishing market centres, notably Maidstone and Cranbrook. Catholicism was restricted to less than ten chapels, all in the dockyard areas, and there were two small Synagogues, one in Canterbury and one in Sheerness. Some of the more eclectic Christian sects had small followings: ten followers of Joanna Southcotte, for example, met in the licensed room in Trotterscliffe, a tiny hamlet near Wrotham Heath.[36]

Inland, however, rural and provincial Kent was predominantly Anglican, and traditional Anglican at that: prior to the late 1830s Kentish clergymen, with only a few exceptions, were decidedly un-evangelical in their ways, including those who

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[32] For details of the Kentish paper industry in this period, see D.C.Coleman, 'Combinations of Capital and Labour in the English Paper Industry, 1789-1825', *Economica*, vol. 21, no 81 (1954), 32-53.
[33] *Pigot & Co.'s London and Provincial New Commercial Directory for 1826-7* (London: 1826. Third edition), 633.
[34] *Pigot & Co.'s Royal National and Commercial Directory and Topography of the Counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex* (London: J Pigot, 1839; facsimile, London: Michael Winter, 1993), 95-96.
[35] PP 1835, Reports from the Commissioners of Municipal Corporations in England and Wales, 706, 768. For details of the Cobb family's official responsibilities in Margate including mayoral duties, see Cobb Papers, EKA U1453/4 and U1453/8.
[36] Returns of Anglican places of worship in each parish made to the Clerk of Peace's office, East and West Kent, 1829, CKS Q/CR3; see also Nigel Yates, 'The major Kentish Towns in the religious Census of 1851', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 100 (1984), 399-423.

occupied the hub of Anglican power in Canterbury.[37] The Anglican clergy did relatively little to forge links with wider communities or counter non-attendance, despite the growing enthusiasm among the Kentish elite for evangelical and missionary societies, directed at the poor at home and abroad.[38] Indeed, the relationship between the Church and the bulk of the population was far from uniformly harmonious: pluralism of livings was rife and tensions ran high over tithe payments - one of the grievances in the Captain Swing riots in 1830.[39] Other political issues that caused tension included 'Reform': in 1832, Archbishop Howley was 'jeered' and bombarded with eggs on his arrival in Canterbury because of his opposition to the bill.[40] Nevertheless, the church was powerful in the county, both in terms of its dominance of religious worship, its own land and wealth, and its support from people of land and wealth - there were many Tories who jumped to the defence of Church rates and tithes, for example, and they defended Anglican supremacy with gusto during the Emancipation Crisis.[41] Overall, then, the county lived up to its image as a staunchly Anglican stronghold.

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[37] From the late 1830s, however, the picture changed radically and the Oxford movement, and church rebuilding, was particularly strong in Kent, partially thanks to the presence of activist A.J. Beresford-Hope, of Bedgebury Hall, near Tunbridge Wells, M.P. for Maidstone 1841-1852. See H. W. Law and I. Law, *The Book of the Beresford Hopes* (London: Heath Cranton, 1925); Nigel Yates, *Kent and the Oxford Movement: Selected Documents* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983).

[38] Elizabeth Melling, 'An age of religious pluralism 1830-1914', in Hume, Yates and Hastings ed., *Religion and Society in Kent*, 56-58.

[39] Reay, *Rural Englands*, 149-50.

[40] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 54.

[41] Melling, 'The Anglican Establishment and its Critics, 1714-1830' in Hume, Yates and Hastings eds., *Religion and Society in Kent'*, 23-25; *KG*, 27/2/1816, *KG*, 28/10/1828, *MJKA*, 4/11/1828.

iii. Land and Sea: Communications, Trade, Empire and War

Perceptions of locality and community were also influenced by imperial expansion. Britain's union with Ireland, in 1801, led to increased immigration from across the Irish Sea, which impacted throughout Great Britain. While in Kent there was little large-scale permanent settling, unlike in London and in the northern industrial cities, tens of thousands of temporary immigrant labourers travelled to the region at harvest time.[42] In the other direction, 'excess' population was leaving Kent at this time for Imperial destinations, notably the so-called 'white settler' colonies of Australia, Canada and the United States of America.[43] Among those departing for Australia, of course, were convicts, most famously those condemned for their role in the 'Captain Swing' disturbances.[44]

Kent's seaports were important hubs of population, boosting wider national and international trade and passage of peoples, as well as acting as market towns for the surrounding countryside. Aside from Deptford, Greenwich and Woolwich in the north-west, Kent was home to three other Royal Dockyards, at Chatham, Sheerness and, on a smaller scale, at Deal.[45] There were privately owned dockyards all along

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[42] Peter Mathias, *The Brewing Industry* (Cambridge University Press, 1959), 492-3; Neal, 'English-Irish conflict in Rural England: The case of the Irish Migrant', in Belchem and Tenfelde eds., *Irish and Polish Migration in Comparative Perspective*, 50; Another reason for increased migrant labour in this period was that the post-war recession hit Ireland particularly hard. R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1993), 318; G. O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 135.

[43] Armstrong, 'Population', in Armstrong ed, *The Economy of Kent*, 32-33.

[44] Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, 226-241; George Rudé, *Protest and Punishment: The Story of the Social and Political Protesters Transported to Australia, 1788-1868* (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1978); David Kent and Norma Townsend, 'Some Aspects of Colonial Marriage: A Case Study of the Swing Protesters', *Labour History*, vol. 44 (1998), 40-53.

[45] The Royal Dockyards (i.e. state-owned dockyards) at Greenwich, Woolwich, Deptford, Chatham and Sheerness benefited greatly from proximity to London and the boom in shipbuilding and other trades in the wartime period. Likewise, they were not immune to the economic slump post-1815,

the coast, including at Sandwich and Dover.[46] Kent was home to ports large and small, which catered for local trade and traffic as well as transport to the continent and further afield.

Of note among Kent's global links were the many East India Company officials who made their home in the county and whose trading ships left from the county's ports, such as the Larkins of Dover.[47] Kent was also the second largest provider of navy personnel, after Devon. Because of their joint primacy as the two foremost naval counties, Kent and Devon had many links and much exchange of population.[48] Notable among individuals from Devon who became prominent in Kentish politics in the 1820s and 1830s was the 'radical' politician Sir William Cosway, from Devonport, who removed his base to Kent because of his military career.[49]

Kent's seaside was a thriving destination for holidaymakers. On the Isle of Thanet, at the most easterly tip of the Kentish peninsula, Broadstairs, Ramsgate and notably Margate had established themselves as popular resorts in the eighteenth century. They continued to flourish in the post-1815 era, as numerous resort guides and

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where, once again, the defects were felt most strongly in the dockyards after a prolonged period of high productivity. Roger Morris, *The Royal Dockyards during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Leicester University Press, 1983), 1; J.M.Haas, 'Work and Authority in the Royal Dockyards from the Seventeenth Century to 1870', in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* vol. 124, no. 6 (1980), 419-428.

[46] Robin Craig and John Whyman, 'Kent and the Sea', in Armstrong ed., *The Economy of Kent,* 162.

[47] Craig and Whyman, 'Kent and the Sea', 166; Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, 57: Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 29.

[48] Craig and Whyman, 'Kent and the Sea', 162-3;

[49] *MJKA*, 13/6/1837.

holiday diaries testify.[50] Tunbridge Wells was an inland, tourist and retreat destination. Far in the West on the Sussex border, the fashionable resort was home to spas and pleasure gardens. Its appeal to the leisured classes is reflected in the disproportionate number of residents of 'independent means' who resided there.[51]

Because of its unique location, between the continent and London, roads and communications were relatively good compared to other English provinces. In the period of the Napoleonic wars and the following decades, Kent provided the quickest routes for many forms of communication and transport between the metropolis and the continent. Dover and the other seaports were the last stop for many travelers before they embarked for France and the point of arrival for numerous visitors and home-comers to England. The shoreline of France was visible from many points along the Kentish coast, notably from the port of Dover. It was not just the wealthier portions of society who made the Channel crossing; in the 1830s, French traders sold produce in the markets of the Thanet towns.[52] According to Renard Morieux, the movement of 'manufacturers, peddlers and vagrants' between the south of England and the north of France was on such a scale

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[50] John Whyman , *Aspects of Holidaymaking and Resort Development within the Isle of Thanet, with Particular Reference to Margate* (Gloucester: Kentish Sources VIII, 1985). See also, D.R. Oliver ed., *The Diary of William Benge, 1837* (Broadstairs, 1994). There are dozens of guides to Kent holiday destinations, particularly those on the Isle of Thanet. See for example, *A Week at Margate; or, economy of time and money, shewing a traveller to the Isle of Thanet how to dispose of both to ... advantage* (London: 1825, Second edition); *A Guide from London to Gravesend, Herne Bay, and Margate* (London: B. Steill, 1837).

[51] Christopher Chalklin, 'The Towns', in Armstrong ed., *The Economic History of Kent,* 219; Kristina Taylor, 'The Oldest Surviving Pleasure Garden in Britain: Cold Bath, near Tunbridge Wells in Kent', *Garden History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2000); P.Hembry, *The English Spa, 1560-1815: A Social History* (London: Athlone, 1990); *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 135-139.

[52] Dover, Margate, and Ramsgate held markets which sold local as well as imported produce. Ramsgate market, for example, posted stalls by French traders who sold 'eggs, fruits and other commodities', *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 109.

as to suggest that the boundaries of nationhood could have been challenged amongst such groupings by forms of 'channel identity'.[53]

The pull of the metropole influenced mobility of population. Kent was particularly densely covered with landed estates because of its proximity to London. From the north-west of the county, the gentry and aristocracy were effectively able to commute between their countryseats and the hub of the 'Metropole'. Travelling between east Kent and London, however, took the best part of the day and entailed time away from home and family.[54] The less privileged also moved between Kent, particularly the north and western parts, and London, the source of work for country and provincial town labourers in times of unemployment, particular during the harvest.[55] In terms of mileage to be covered, it was not difficult for Kentish labourers to attend events in London, such as 'radical' meetings at the rotunda, as it was feared they did in the early 1830s.[56]

In this period, communications were continually improving. Indeed, there was a striking difference between the relatively limited transport links of Kentish towns listed in the *Pigot's Directory* of 1826, and those listed in 1839. A railway from Canterbury to Whitstable, the first passenger railway in the country, was completed in 1835: its engine, despite its well-documented inadequacies, was named

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[53] Renard Morieux, "'An Inundation from our Shores' Travelling Across the Channel around the Peace of Amiens', paper delivered at a conference on 'The invasion of Britain, 1803', University of Oxford, 2000. Accessed at <www.politics.ox.ac.uk./philp/eng/eng-papers.htm>

[54] Letters from Sir Edward Knatchbull to Fanny Knatchbull, 1820-1845, CKS U951/C2-4.

[55] PP 1828, Poor Laws, Evidence of Thomas Law Hodges, 20; PP 1828, Agriculture, 324; PP 1836, Agriculture, 43; Reay , *Rural Englands*, 18-19.

[56] HO 40/25 65-68.

'INVICTA': the motto of 'Men of Kent'.[57] In 1839, there were trains for passengers and goods to Whitstable every day, every two hours between 10am and 6pm, met by water carriers for a swift journey to London. From Canterbury and Maidstone, coaches and vans went to small villages and large towns all over the county, as well as to the major ports like Dover.[58]

Such a prominent, maritime location, of course, gave Kent other important functions beyond communications, trade and leisure. Kent had been of military significance ever since conceptions of territory or nationhood emerged in the British Isles. The Napoleonic wars saw a level of military activity on a scale previously unknown. New defenses and barracks were built throughout the county, including in the two most significant towns, Canterbury and Maidstone.[59] While some fell swiftly into disrepair after the cessation of the European conflicts, the military, now chiefly engaged domestically and in the Empire, remained an important component of many of Kent's major towns. The Maidstone barracks, for example, functioned from 1797 as a depot for troops on their way to India.

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[57] PP 1835, Municiple Corporations Act, 709; F. W. Jessup, *The History of Kent* (Maidstone: Phillimore and Co. Ltd., 1974), 146.

[58] From Canterbury in 1839 there were eight daily coaches to London, 'Royal Mail', 'Eagle', 'Defiance', 'Express', 'Tally Ho', 'Phoenix' and 'Union'. In addition there were two coaches to Deal, and one each to Dover, Maidstone, Margate and Sandwich, plus numerous vans, water carriers and the railway to Whitstable. From Cranbrook the Flower of Kent went daily to London and Tenterden, alongside vans to London, Maidstone and Robertsbridge, *Pigot's Directory 1839*, 19, 26. Apart from the railway, the relative improvements were greater in Cranbrook than they were in Canterbury between 1826 and 1839. In 1826, Canterbury already had five daily coaches to London, but only two coaches served the seaports. There was no daily London coach from Cranbrook, *Pigot's Directory 1826/7,* 601-607.

[59] Lists of barracks in Kent can be found in the *Kent Gazette*, 7/7/1815. See also Christopher Tolkien, 'The Towns' in Armstrong ed., *The Economy of Kent,* 222-223.

Throughout the period, the numbers of military stationed in the county fluctuated, but they were consistently present.[60]

Two major factors, then, defined 'Kent' in the early nineteenth century. These were the predominantly, although not uniformly, non-industrial, agricultural-based economy, and its unique, maritime location between London and the continent. Most other definitional factors stemmed from these two fundamental aspects of the county, including the dominance of the landed aristocracy, the nature of social and economic change in its towns and seaports, and its military significance. These elements also hold the key to the ways in which Kent was perceived at the time, and forms of belonging, to both 'county' and 'nation', which were experienced. Kent may have consisted of over fifteen hundred square miles of relative diversity, yet this English county was also deeply imbued with a 'sense of place'.

3. A Sense of 'Time': Cultural Responses

i. Social Change and 'Romanticism'

In early nineteenth-century England, a sense of 'change' was experienced on an unusually perceptible scale. Population growth, and the economic fluctuations that followed the end of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, had an enormous effect on the social, political and economic state of Great Britain in general and impacted, in specific ways, on each of its regions. Depression and widespread domestic unrest was prevalent, particularly in the late 1810s and early 1820s, and again in the late

[60] Peter Clarke and Lyn Murfin, *The History of Maidstone: The Making of a Modern County Town* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1995), 101-2; Cobbett, *Rural Rides,* 203; *Pigots Directory 1839*, 33. For lists of barracks see PP 1831-2, Return of Barracks in the United Kingdom, xxvii.

1820s and early 1830s.[61] Popular protests, which often took the form of arson and threatening notes, were prevalent throughout this period and not just confined to the famous, and unusually overt, Swing outbreaks of 1830.[62]

The available ideological responses to these economic difficulties were conditioned by the specific cultural climate. In short, the people of England were still absorbing the shock waves of the events of the aforesaid revolutions, the prolonged and often fervently patriotic wars, and then the moment of national, yet precarious, sublimity that was the triumph of Waterloo in July 1815.[63] Neither the forces of 'radicalism' or 'reaction' held sway, yet ideological responses in the years of post-war fallout were chiefly defined within the parameters set by these series of traumatic events. The democratising impulses fuelled by 1789, and then tempered by repression and war, for example, were revived in the years after Waterloo. 'Radicalism', vocalised in its various guises by talismanic individuals like Henry Hunt and William Cobbett, flourished, particularly in the industrial towns of the north. It was checked once again by government repression, notably the massacre at Manchester's St Peter's Fields in 1819, where mounted Yeomen, voluntary soldiers, charged and fired upon a meeting of the working classes, held in order to campaign for Parliamentary 'Reform'.[64] Government brutality and coercion fuelled the flames of

[61] G.E.Mingay and J.Chambers, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880* (London: Batsford, 1966), 127-8.
[62] See Roger Wells, 'The development of the English rural proletariat and social protest, 1700-1850' and 'Rejoinder' in Reed and Wells eds., *Social Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880.*
[63] For the impact of Waterloo on the culture of the immediate post-war years, see Philip Shaw, *Waterloo in the 'Romantic' Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 4, 34.
[64] E. P. Thompson places great weight upon the symbolic moment of the Peterloo massacre, a moment at which England was on the verge of revolution, Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 603. The symbolism of the 'moment' of the Peterloo massacre, and of the year 1819,

debate and brought much sympathy to the cause of 'Reform' from the rising urban and industrial middle classes, and 'public opinion' which was of increasing importance in the post-war era.[65] Nevertheless, campaigns for Parliamentary 'Reform' were only to gain really effective impetus in the late 1820s.[66]

The forces of so-called 'reaction' can be detected even amongst 'radicals' and 'reformers'. This was not yet 'Victorian England'. The ideologies of the 'men of 1851', who placed their supreme confidence in science, progress, industrialization, imperial expansion and British supremacy in a globalised context, were still in a gestation period, and would have to compete and negotiate with other, equally powerful 'worldviews' over the next few decades.[67] Indeed, if the influence either of the two highly authoritative 1790s polemicists, Paine or Burke, were in the ascendancy in post 1815 England, it was arguably the latter.

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have recently been interrogated by historians who have questioned whether this truly was a revolutionary moment, in the sense of the Marxist culmination of 'class conflict', instead interrogating the 'languages of class' and their unstable symbolism and meaning. Jones, 'Introduction' in *Languages of Class*; Epstein, 'Understanding the Cap of Liberty', 75-6. Literary critics have integrated the 'romanticism' of this moment, and responses by poets and writers, including Sir Walter Scott and Percy Shelley. The most comprehensive analysis in this vein is Chandler, *England in 1819,* 15-17, 81-82: see also Robert Reid, *The Peterloo Massacre* (London: Heinemann, 1989); and Robert Walmsley, *Peterloo: The Case Reopened* (Manchester University Press, 1969).

[65] Dror Wahrman, 'The Limits of Constitutional Politics', in Vernon ed., *Rereading the Constitution.*

[66] There is a wide literature on the 1832 Reform Act. See Innes and Burns eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850.* For detailed accounts of the parliamentary process, see Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1973). For an overview of parliamentary politics in this period, see Michael Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy*, 1815-1914 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 33-53.

[67] Asa Briggs, The Crystal Palace and the 'Men of 1851', in *Victorian People. A Reassessment of Periods and Themes, 1851-1867,* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1975), 23-59. For an account of imperial, metropolitan 'English' identities at the middle of the nineteenth century, see C.Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 272-289.

The general trend of art and poetry in this period was indicative of a shift in popular culture towards forms of conservative 'romanticism', which looked to the past as much as to the future. Inspired by the seemingly fantastic events of the previous decades, for which dry logic or mere 'progress' seemed inadequate explanations, such imaginings were not merely reactive, but creatively imbued concepts such as 'nation' with perennial and self-perpetuating realities. As Nicholas Roe has observed, among the popular writers of the period, only the 'radical' minority, such as Shelley and Byron, evoked nationhood as the cause of national 'peoples' arising against monarchical oppression or oligarchy, continuing the modified tradition of support for the iconic moment of the storming of the Bastille in 1789. Instead, it was the later verses of Wordsworth that were the more representative of the 'spirit of the age', articulating an 'insular and conservative' vision of 'Englishness' that celebrated the local and the historical.[68] 'Burkean' evocations of society, then, 'naturalised' the bonds between the different ranks of society and linked past, present and future, into an organically evolving whole.[69]

On the surface, the people of Kent, or indeed, of provincial southern England in general, were not overtly 'romantic'. Their preoccupations appeared primarily economic and social. Population growth was perceptible, and increasingly a 'problem' that relatively small-scale schemes of emigration or tentative allotment

[68] Roe, 'Introduction', in Roe ed., *'Romanticism'. An Oxford Guide*, 6, 21-23; Lui, 'Wordsworth: The 'History' in Imagination', 86.
[69] Spence, *The Birth of Romantic Radicalism*, 8.

projects could not redress.[70] There was high unemployment, prices were low, and rents were high, the latter often not far-off the levels of the wartime boom. Tithes, duties, monetary issues and the malfunctioning Poor Law, were, among other things, variously blamed for increasing concerns about the 'state of the nation'. Moreover, the countryside was still going through structural changes, which had been accelerating since the early eighteenth century, with the general impulse towards larger farms being overseen by tenants and middlemen, and away from being worked by small owner-occupiers.[71]

There was little doubt that real small owner-occupiers were facing great difficulties in the early nineteenth century. Although regional variation was great, enclosure or the expansion of large, capitalist estates meant that, in many areas, they had been bought out, or pushed out of business because their estates had become economically unviable.[72] F.M.L. Thompson described the 'small landowners' who still cultivated their own land in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as

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[70] Alan Everitt has commented that the impact on the landscape of the population growth in this period was 'unparalleled' and greater than any time since the colonisation of the Weald in the generations following the Norman conquest. Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', 29-30; For emigration see, PP 1826, Minutes of Select Committee on Emigration, 135-143, 185.

[71] The literature on these changes is extensive, but two overall summaries from contrasting perspectives are John E. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England, 1780-1840* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 8-27, and Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer.*

[72] This argument was summarised by Engels in 'The condition of England: The Eighteenth Century', First published in *Vorwärts!* (Paris, 1844), 71. The Hammonds also maintained that small farmers (owner-occupiers) were, along with cottagers and squatters, 'ruined' by enclosure. J.L.Hammond, & Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer 1760 – 1832: A Study in the Government of England before the Reform Bill* (London and New York: Longmans, 1912), 96. For an opposing argument see Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer*, 10. An overview of 'Tory' and 'Marxist' accounts of these changes is outlined in Robert C. Allan, *Enclosure and the Yeoman, 1450 – 1850* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 1-13. Allan ultimately argued that the 'yeomen' had their own, particularly innovative, agrarian revolution that preceded that of the landlords, in the seventeenth century. They were then obliterated by the landlords, land-grabbing revolution in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For regional variation, see Wordie, 'Social Change on the Levesson Gower Estate 1714-1832', *The Economic History Review*, vol. 27, no. 4 (1972), 593-4.

the 'survivors of the true yeomen stock', who fitted 'somewhat uneasily into the structure of the landed interest'.[73]

While the effects and historical 'necessity' of these complex and regionally specific changes have been much debated by historians of the 'left' and 'right', the basic responses of the 'agricultural interest' are well known.[74] Many of the visible manifestations of discontent in the years 1815-37, particularly in the short time span of the later 1820s and early 1830s, were in provincial, and predominantly agrarian, southern England. Ongoing popular protest and discontent peaked in 1816, with the 'bread or blood' riots in East Anglia, and then on a greater scale in 1830, with the 'Swing' unrest, which encompassed widespread rickburning, machine breaking, demands for higher wages and the leaving of threatening notes.[75] The more affluent sections of society in Kent, for instance, became particularly vocal and politically organised towards the end of the 1820s, with the intent of inducing government at Westminster to legislate favourably on their behalf. The most pressing issue, the subject of county meetings from 1821 onwards, was the 'state of agriculture', which encompassed the various effects of fluctuating prices, the dreaded prospect of free-trade and the very visible poverty amongst the so-called 'lower orders'.[76] Farmers, either locally, or initiated by national organisations, were particularly concerned by 'protection' of agriculture,

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[73] F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*, 7-8.
[74] Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England', in Reed and Wells eds., *Class, Conflict, and Protest in the English Countryside.*
[75] Wells, 'Moral Economy of the English Countryside', in Randall and Charlesworth eds., *'Moral Economy and Popular Protest,* 210.
[76] Lord Stanhope, printed address on 'The State of the Country', 1821. Stanhope papers. CKS U1590 C196/1. See also C196/6. 23/12/32, 23/3/33.

particularly the corn-laws, debates about which were to rage until the late 1840s.[77] In Kent, duties on hops and malt were also of particular interest and motivated meetings and societies.[78]

So compelling were these matters - 'change' in the countryside, and its relation to social unrest, free-trade and the Corn Laws - that other major political questions of the day, notably those of the representation of the individual and the nation and Parliamentary 'Reform', could be interlinked. Indeed, the question of 'Reform' was often negotiated along the lines of whether or not the balance of power between 'agriculture' and 'industry', would alter unfavourably if changes were made to the constitution.[79]

ii. The Ideologies of 'Old England'

The perceived 'state' of agriculture impinged on imaginings of time and place throughout the English counties and, as such, requires discussion in this broad context. Responses were diverse, and included the millenarian beliefs of Thomas Spence and, in a Scottish context, the early utopian socialism of Robert Owen.[80]

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[77] Wordie, 'Perceptions and Reality: The Effects of the Corn Laws and the Repeal in England, 1815-1906', in Wordie ed., *Agriculture and Politics in England, 1815–1939* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 33-59; Travis L. Crosby, *English Farmers and the Politics of Protection, 1815-1852* (The Harvester Press: Hassocks, 1977).

[78] Crosby, *English Farmers and the Politics of Protection,* 14-15.

[79] Crosby, *English Farmers and the Politics of Protection,* 16. Crosby suggests that many farmers were indifferent to the cause of 'Reform' because of their conviction that parliamentary politicians had shown 'insensitivity to their economic plight'. In 1830-1, the Tory party in Kent attempted to rally supporters against 'Reform' on the grounds that it would be unfavourable to 'protection' and would spoil the balance of power which was then in favour of the 'landed interest'. *KG,* 21/4/1831, 3/5/1831.

[80] Malcolm Chase, *The People's Farm: English Radical Agrarianism 1775-1840* (Oxford University Press, 1988); Jeremy Burchard, *Paradise Lost. Rural Idyll and Social Change in England since 1800* (London: Taurus, 2002), 35-39.

However, these were minority voices. Powerful landlords crusading for 'agricultural interests', 'protectionist' farmers, and even 'radical' journalists such as William Cobbett, all drew upon imaginings of agrarian 'golden ages' in the past in order to conceive of positive futures for agricultural England. These were 'romantic' visions, in which society was conceived as both 'familial', based upon face-to-face communities in which the rich look after 'their own' poor; and 'national', as inherently, perennially 'English'. The latter aspect is best explained in the sense that small-scale 'organic communities' – often distinguished by the harmonious hierarchy of 'landlord, yeomen and peasant' - were perceived to be a timeless feature of 'England', found in such a form nowhere else, but which had somehow been corrupted by the recent apocalyptic changes. Thus, they needed to be revived or reconfigured for the future.[81]

A recurring motif at political meetings and newspapers, which evoked this lost 'paradise', was the concept of 'Old England'. The subject of serious political polemic as well as songs, poems and toasts, 'Old England' was imagined in innumerable ways. Like many discourses of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' in this era, it could have military connotations, inspired by the numerous conflicts of the eighteenth century: the 'wooden walls of Old England' were, according to the popular song, the navy, and 'Hearts of Oak', of course, fought for 'old England again and again'.[82] 'Old England' was also the nostalgic term for the homeland

[81] For a comparable explanation of William Cobbett's 'Old England', see Williams, *Cobbett*, 55-56.
[82] See for example H. Green, 'The Wooden Walls of Old England. An Ode', c.1790. For an example of it being sung at political meetings, see *Berkshire Chronicle,* 25/10/1828; 'Hearts of Oak' (1759), was written by Dr. William Boyce with words by David Garrick. During the Battle of Barossa, part

used by soldiers, tourists and emigrants, in letters back to their loved ones.[83] More pertinently, however, 'Old England' found its expression in the press and at provincial political dinners and meetings, a rallying cry for the traditionalist values of upholding constitution, church and king, opposition to Catholic Emancipation, the upholding of agricultural 'protection' with 'zeal', and the notion of 'peasant, yeomen and landlord', living in harmony. Provincial newspapers, such as the *Berkshire Chronicle, Hampshire Chronicle* and the *Kent Gazette* and *Kent Observer*, extolled the cause of 'Old England' with increasing enthusiasm in the latter 1820s and early 1830s.[84] An 'Old English' scene was one of harmony, abundance, prosperity and good food, where 'yeomen' sat down to eat the 'roast beef of old England', accompanied with veal pies, plum pudding and bread.[85]

The metropolitan press, although dominated by more liberal tomes, notably *The Times*, also had its devout 'Old Englanders'. The staunchly Tory *Old England and Constitution* emerged for a short run in 1824-5, and was re-launched to greater, but still limited success as *Old England* in 1832, lingering this time until 1836. The journal celebrated the inception of Conservative Associations in the southern counties in 1833 with the sentiment that, 'Old English' feelings and principles were to 'give happiness to the humble and make responsibility the necessary companion of superiority'.[86]

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of the Peninsular campaign in 1811, Major Brown is said to have sung the song as he led the attack. For an example, see *MJKA*, 28/10/1828.

[83] Diary of Charles Knatchbull, 1/7/1836, CKS U951 F23.

[84] See for example, *Berkshire Chronicle*, 20/10/1828, 5/11/1831; *Kentish Observer*, 11/10/1832.

[85] *Hampshire Chronicle*, 2/7/1832.

[86] *Old England*, 13/1/1833.

'Old England' was not purely the domain of the Tory press. Historians' debates on 'moral economies', and their erosion by structural and attitudinal changes imposed by government and landholders in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, suggest the importance of 'golden age' beliefs to certain sectors of the rural poor.[87] Ian Dyck, for example, has argued that the attitudes of labourers were firmly grounded in experience of actual better conditions in the period 1720 to 1785: 'For Cobbett and the labourers 'Old England' was a construction of class experience and of their perception of relative economic prosperity in the past'.[88] Popular ballads also suggest a nostalgia for recent history, with an emphasis on the food believed to have been available - particularly the 'roast beef of old England' - which was no longer the daily diet of the English rural worker.[89] William Cobbett's articulations of 'Old England' were based on his perception of better conditions in a past England of beauty and plenty, before the social order was perverted.[90] In this genuinely 'English' land, existing now only in childhood memories, dwelled true

[87] The classic account of the 'moral economy', focusing on the customs and culture of the crowd in the eighteenth century, can be found in E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd', 185-259. In his follow up essay, 'The Moral Economy Reviewed', Thompson critiques the use of the concept as a 'catch-all' phrase, which overlooks the specific conditions of protest in different times and places, E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, 259-351. A discerning response, which analyses the specific circumstances of protest in the south-east, can be found in Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', in Randall and Charlesworth eds. *Moral Economy and Popular Protest,* 209-255. Barry Reay has also cautioned that the moral economy should not be presented as an 'unswerving, sociopolitical worldview', Reay, *Rural Englands*, 161.

[88] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture,* 138.

[89] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture,* 132-135. Dyck backed up his cultural analysis with quantitative and qualitative data compiled by Keith Snell, which suggests that real wages rose in the period before 1780, and then declined during the war years and after, Keith Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor. Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[90] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*, 138. See also, Williams, *Cobbett*, 55-56; Green, *Great Cobbett*, 'Introduction'.

'yeomen-farmers', small owner-occupiers who tilled their own land, as opposed to mere tenant farmers, and who invested in its upkeep.[91]

iii. The 'Yeomen' of 'Old England'

The figure of the 'yeoman', as an icon of true masculine 'Englishness', was at the heart of Cobbett's imaginings of 'Old England'. In his most explicitly historical work, the *History of the Protestant Reformation* (1825), Cobbett constructed an idealised England in which 'yeomen' flourished, and the land was cared for, in the reign of King Alfred. Alfred was a 'king', 'soldier' and 'patriot', who ensured that 'the revenues of a large part of the lands of the country to be spent on the spot whence those revenues arose'. Important stages in the decline of these ancient and righteous methods were, not surprisingly, the Norman Conquest and the Reformation. Before the latter, arguably more significant even than the 'Norman Yoke', the benign attitude of priests, who, unlike their much derided nineteenth-century successors, were apparently disinterested in profit, allowed to exist 'a class of...real yeomen, independent of the aristocracy...' who had subsequently been harried from their farms and reduced to landless labourers.[92]

Discussions of the decline of the 'yeoman' belied contemporary preoccupations with race and ethnic origins that infiltrated the world-views of people of all classes. Indeed, the very notion of 'Old England', particularly of the 'old English yeomen', conjured up images of a hardy, land-working, pureblooded and masculine 'race',

[91] Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (1823).
[92] Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation in a Series of Letters* (London: Charles Clevel, 1824-5), letter 5; Intro to *Rural Rides*, 8.

existing in a benign, hierarchical society of plenty, and moving, in ideal circumstances, more or less unaltered through time. William Woodbine, allegedly of 'labouring stock' and editor of *The British Yeoman, and Rural Gazette*, saw plain-dealing and generous 'yeoman' virtues as having their origins in the 'Old England' of King Alfred, but lamented that these 'pure' uncorrupted roots of 'Englishness' may be as lost as Alfred in the mists of time.[93]

An interest in pure 'English' origins can certainly be discerned in literature of the time. Sir Walter Scott's hugely successful novels of medieval heroism in England and Scotland played an important role in the popular revival of chivalry and in the 'reclaiming' of a racially pure English Anglo-Saxon past and of related, idealised images of 'English' masculinity.[94] Like in the more overtly politicised works of Woodbine and Cobbett, Scott's 'yeomen' were the backbone of 'Old England', and arguable the 'truest' proponent of 'Englishness' in his writings. In his most famous work, *Ivanhoe* (1819), the Saxon 'Knight Errant' was himself estranged from his Saxon origins by his crusades in the East, and to be a real hero, King Richard needed to be 'Saxonised' by his union with Rowena. Nevertheless, they counted among their followers Robin Hood and his men, fine specimens of 'stout well-set yeoman, arrayed in Lincoln green'. Their sturdy, plain speaking, personas and heroics are identified as Saxon traits, revealed in a particularly positive light when compared to the duplicitous, although victimised Jew, Isaac, the invariably slimy

[93] *The British Yeoman, and Rural Gazette* (London: J. Pritchett, 1832), vol. 1, 7/1/1832.
[94] Billie Melman, ' Claiming the Nation's Past. The Reinvention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 26, no. 34 (1991), 575-595. See also Millgate, 'Making It New: Scott, Constable, Ballantyne, and the Publication of 'Ivanhoe'.

Norman Knights, and evil Prince John. Ivanhoe's 'yeomen', resist the tyranny of French rule and fight boldly.[95] Laying siege to the Norman-held castle of Torquilstone, they helped their masters to achieve victory, and a slight tempering of the 'Norman yoke'.[96]

Scott's influence has been discerned in evocations of England's origins in 1840s 'state of the nation' literature, including Carlisle's *Past and Present*, and Disraeli's *Sybil*.[97] The origins of Disraeli's reconfiguration of conservatism, which emphasised the organic 'bonds of society and the importance of including the poor in the English nation', are comparable with the wider responses of the 'agricultural interest' to the problems of the 1830s.[98] A character in *Sybil* suggests that it is the 'yeoman' that once provided the crucial middling ground between masters and slaves, luxury and misery, echoing Cobbett's lament for society prior to the Reformation:

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[95] Although much has been made of Scott's anti-semitism, Michael Ragussis has argued that the Scottish writer was not entirely anti-Jewish, but rather made a passionate plea against the persecution of Jews, Michael Ragussis, 'Writing English History: Nationalism and 'National Guilt', in Ragussis, ed., *Figures of Conversion: The Jewish Question & English National Identity* (Duke University Press, 1995), 89-126.

[96] Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (Penguin Popular Classics, 1994. First published 1819).

[97] Melman, 'Claiming the Nation's Past', 579-81; Clare A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth-century British Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

[98] Simone Borgstede, "All is Race'. Inclusion and Exclusion in Disraeli's Discourses of Race and Nation', Paper given at the conference on 'Inclusion and Exclusion in the long nineteenth-century', at the University of Hamburg, 5-7 May, 2006. Although Disraeli's background was unconventional, by the 1840s he was very familiar with the language and rhetoric of English provincial politics, particularly the Conservative dinner, which he frequented during his early political career. He was elected for Maidstone in 1837 having attended the usual rounds of entertainment. The Tory voters welcomed his 'protectionist' and anti-New Poor Law stance, although the 'liberal' opposition shouted anti-Jewish insults as he spoke upon the hustings. *MGKC*, 1/8/1837; Sarah Bradford, *Disraeli* (London: George Wiedenfield, 1982), 90-94.

> There were yeomen then, sir: the country was not divided into two classes, masters and slaves; there was some resting-place between luxury and misery. Comfort was an English habit then, not merely an English word.[99]

'Yeomen', then, evoked images of comfort: not excess or luxury, but the hard-earned fruits of a man's labour upon the land, including the 'Englishman's' birthright, roast beef. These 'comforts' were cultural 'rights' that many ordinary English countrymen perceived they had lost, drawing upon the resources of their own individual and collective memories.[100] Against the backdrop of sporadic food scarcity and rising prices, the loss of the symbolic daily meal of roast beef was particularly lamented alongside the decline of its 'yeomen' consumers: according to Cobbett, the true England of 'roast beef' had been transformed into a land of 'dry bread, or of oatmeal porridge'.[101] To Cobbett, indeed, the consumption of meat was a crucial element in setting apart the true land-working 'Englishman' from their definitional 'Others', including the potato-eating Irish, and their less-hardy brothers in the industrial north.[102] Popular ballads also suggest nostalgia for recent history, with an emphasis on the decimation of the 'roast beef of old England', no longer the daily diet of the English rural worker.[103] At the heart of such yearnings, however, was the loss of the one factor that truly defined the 'yeoman' and his 'manly' independence: the right to own and work one's own land.[104]

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[99] Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil, or the Two Nations* (Oxford: World's Classics, 1986. First published 1845), 61.
[100] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture,* 138.
[101] Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland* (London: Charles Clavel, 1824-25), LETTER VI, 25/4/1825.
[102] *CPR*, 20/2/1830.
[103] For more on beef as a symbol of 'Britishness' or 'Englishness', see Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty. Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003).
[104] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture,* 132-135. See also Peter Jones, 'Captain Swing and Rural Popular Culture', University of Southampton PhD., 2004, 54, 67.

iv. 'Paternalism' and 'Golden Ages'

To further illustrate the ideologies of 'Old England' as they infiltrated every day life and experience, it is necessary to turn attention to the activities of the landlords who were at the apex of structures of power in the English countryside. Among the methods with which they met challenges to their authority, and with which they negotiated their day-to-day- role in society, were the ideologies and practices of 'paternalism'.[105] The nature and influence of 'paternalism' has been much debated by historians. It had 'romantic' underpinnings, although historians of the 'left' have tended to regard its practitioners as ultimately, although perhaps subconsciously, insincere. According to E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, for example, 'paternalism' was chiefly a nostalgic ideal, harking back to 'Golden Ages' prior to the corruption of familiar structures of society, in which the poorer strata of society were contented and happy and posed little threat to property, notably to ricks and machinery! Arguably, this 'golden age' was not actually one to which a true return was possible, or even desired, by most landowners. Their status and wealth was now all but inextricable from the capitalist system, which subverted this apparently yearned-for order of things.[106]

However, it would be wrong to dismiss 'paternalism' as always insincere. It is better viewed as a fractured ideology, which was selectively enforced with great

[105] Foster, *The Politics of County Power*, 14-15; Cragoe, *An Anglican aristocracy: The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895*, 2.
[106] E.P. Thompson, 'Patricians and Plebs', in *Customs in Common*, 23-24; Williams, *The Country and the City*, 49.

passion, and which sometimes called upon 'romantic' imagery of the past to evoke a better future. 'Paternalism' was practiced ardently, if selectively, by landlords throughout Great Britain.[107] In Carmaerthanshire, according to Matthew Cragoe, a 'wide range of social involvement' was undertaken by the landed elite, which encompassed 'official' roles as magistrates alongside voluntary activities, such as financially supporting schools, churches and hospitals. These activities, while driven by religious duty, can best 'be comprehended within the sphere of practical paternalism'.[108] Elsewhere, 'paternalistic' rituals, which attempted to bring together different classes of rural society, were also identifiable. Landlords, particularly in the post-Swing and New Poor Law era, provided congenial moments of contact between themselves and their underlings, notably the annual labourers' dinners, which were usually accompanied by festivities. In 1835 Lord Egremont gave a dinner for six thousand local people at his grand country estate at Petworth. When more turned up than had tickets, the elderly peer apparently ordered that the gates be flung open. This was certainly a sincerely felt duty, in which the expectations of employees had to be fulfilled.[109] In 1836, Sir Edward Knatchbull wrote anxiously to his eldest son Norton, in London, imploring him to be home in time for his

[107] While landlords could display 'paternalism' in aspects of their social involvement, in others they can be seen to have rejected any social or familiar bonds with the poor, such as when ratepayers happily rejected 'pro dependency culture' in 1819 with the adoption of the Sterne Bourges Act, Roger Wells, 'Poor Law Reform in the Rural South East: The Impact of the 'Sterne Bourne Acts' during the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835', *Southern History*, vol. 23 (2001), 57.
[108] Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy,* 73.
[109] Charles Greville, *Greville Diary Vol. 1,* 469-470, 23 May 1834.

annual labourers' dinner. The heir's appearance, it seems, was expected and necessary.[110]

Tropes of 'Old England' were also identifiable in the rural festivities and ploughing matches that were the common practice of the Labourers' Friend Society and similar organisations by the mid-to-late 1830s, throughout agrarian England. At the Great Ploughing Match at Cottesmere, Rutland, in 1833, where such practices were perceived to have been a success, the familial structures of society were firmly on display, with the middling class of 'yeomen' in tact: 'the day was ushered in by the ringing of bells and congregating yeoman farmers, their families and husbandmen in their best attire...'. The aims of the organiser, allotment provider Sir Gerard Noel, were to encourage industry and 'manly spirits' by bringing 'back the good old breed of English peasants'. Among the toasts drank was one to the absent Lord Althorpe, who had done all in his power 'to promote the welfare of Old England'.[111]

There were, of course, many factors that influenced landlord-tenant or landlord-employee relationships, not least the economic benefits of fostering a sense of duty from those 'below', and keeping good tenants – who were hard to find – contented.[112] Moreover, the enforcement of neo-feudal bonds between rich,

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[110] Sir Edward Knatchbull to Norton Knatchbull, 17/10/6/1831, CKS U 951 C26/11. For a brief account of a cottage tenants dinner held in the rain, from a younger son's perspective, see Diary of Charles Henry Knatchbull, 14/10/1834, CKS U951 F22.
[111] Anon., *An Address to the Nobility and Landed Proprietors of Great Britain and Ireland by a London Merchant*, dedicated to the right Hon Lord Barham (London: 1834), USSC WP 1150/2, 74.
[112] E.P.Thompson, 'Patricians and Plebs'; Crosby, *English Farmers and the Politics of Protection*, 3.

middling and poor was far from the only ideological underpinning of apparently 'paternalistic' practices.

The allotment movement, for example, was increasingly significant and widespread by the 1830s. Its historian, Jeremy Burchardt, has contended that 'paternalism', in the sense of 'attempts to revert to a society based on difference and hierarchy' was only a 'minor and eccentric strand within the allotment movement'. The drive was towards the 'progressive' nineteenth-century ideals of improved morality and self-help.[113] However, the two ideologies were not necessarily mutually exclusive. An ardent advocate of allotments was Philip, fourth Earl Stanhope, who campaigned tirelessly from the early 1820s for an improvement in the condition of labourers. The fiercely independent peer wrote pamphlets, organised societies and meetings, and proposed and tried out, with varying success, many practical schemes. He experimented with allotments on his Devon estates as early as 1821.[114] While he refuted any desire to create a land of peasant owner-occupiers, his belief in a lost 'golden age' fuelled his mission for the future. In letters to like-minded agricultural 'improvers' he declared that the destruction of small farms and farmers, apparently

[113] Jeremy Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England, 1793-1873* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002). A thorough response to this book, which disputes the weight Burchardt places on the events of 1830 in his developmental schema in favour of responses to the ideology and enactment of the New Poor Law, is made by Roger Wells, 'Historical Trajectories: English Social Welfare Systems, Rural Riots, Popular Politics, Growing Trade Unions, and Allotment Provision, 1793-1896', *Southern History,* vol. 25 (2003).
[114] Aubrey Newman, *The Stanhopes of Chevening* (Macmillan:London, 1869), 228-232, 234-6.

since 1792, had led to 'a very unnatural and disordered state of the body politic'.[115] He would 'hail with pleasure' a 'return to the former system'.[116]

For Stanhope, there was little tension between 'self-help' morality and the 'romantic' ideas of 'community' and 'nation' as familial and historicist entities. His imaginings of 'Old England' were distinguished by very contemporary fears about declining morality and the value of an independent middle class. Like many others, he was a champion of the ubiquitous 'yeomen' as a grouping able to look after themselves but who did not chafe at the hierarchical bonds of authority. Indeed, the loss of the 'yeoman' as a stabilising rural, middle class, was mourned by 'paternalists' and 'moralists' alike. Reverend G.R. Gleig, incumbent of Ash near Sandwich, whose books bewailed the current state of morality at terrifying length, regretted the demise of the 'brace of petty farmers...one of the finest and most virtuous classes of society' whose 'homes were the nurseries of good and faithful servants...'. His 'yeomen' of yesteryear, unlike the labourers and tenants of his own day, did not apparently commit such present evils as going to the pub and reading newspapers! [117] Indeed, the revival of a 'yeoman' class, however unrealistic or vaguely conceived, was still regularly cited as a good way to cultivate motivated, and obedient, subjects for the future. Early support for the 'Labourers' Friend Society' in the *Maidstone Gazette,* for example, suggested that by helping the labourer to 'win for himself an honest independence' landlords would be moving

[115] Stanhope to T.French, 18/9/1820, CKS U1590 C196/6; Lord Stanhope, printed address on 'The State of the Country', 1821, Stanhope papers, CKS U1590 C196/1.
[116] Stanhope to M.Wright, 22/4/1821, CKS U1590 C196/6.
[117] Gleig, *Country Curate*, 63, *Chronicles of Waltham*, 5.

towards the restoration of 'that important branch of the community, the ancient yeomanry or small farmer... he would again recover his long lost energy, and almost forgotten manliness of character'.[118]

v. Popular Protest and Fear of Revolution

The past, however, did not always evoke such nostalgia. The spectre of 1789 continued to haunt the English landed elite. Beneath the veneer of 'paternalism', lurked the fear that 'Old England' could be destroyed by 'radicals', stirring up the very poverty stricken labourers who, within their own parameters, landowners sought to aid.[119]

Such forebodings may have been misplaced. The aims of many popular protesters and 'radicals', indeed, although conceived differently, were not so far removed from the more socially minded landlords. As Alun Howkins has pointed out, the 'protests of the 1830s', inclusive of Cobbett, Swing and even the victims of the battle of Bossenden Wood, 'sought not to overturn the social order, rather to proceed back the right way up'.[120] Extensive work on popular protest also suggests the importance, on occasions such as the 'Swing' riots, of reclaiming lost customary rights, once again with a particular emphasis on food and land, as well as employment.[121]

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[118] *Maidstone Gazette and Kentish Courier* (hereafter *MGKC*) 1/9/1832. See also Anon., *An Address to the Nobility and Landed Proprietors of Great Britain and Ireland by a London merchant*, 77.
[119] Stanhope notes and correspondence on agricultural distress, 23/12/1832, 23/3/1833, CKS U1590 C196/6.
[120] Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, 62.
[121] Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', 227-9, 231-232, 235.

Despite potential ideological similarities, however, landlords were limited in their sympathy, and rarely identified labourers' collective demands for reversion of society with their own. On the contrary, fear and aberration of 'radical' uprisings existed even among the most 'change-orientated' members of the elite. In the early 1820s, false accusations of being a 'radical' revolutionary, for example, led Lord Stanhope to qualify his position on landholding, belying a very real fear of imminent revolution. For Stanhope, any truly 'radical' restructuring of landholding was condemned as 'evil' republicanism and 'un-English'.[122] He was not alone in his beliefs. Lord Teynham feared that the monarchy, the church, and the aristocracy would be overthrown and England would be rendered a 'piratical despotism' comparable to Barbary and Algiers, analogies which drew upon notions both of French republican tyranny and 'black' savagery at once.[123]

By the late 1820s and early 1830s, fears of dramatic uprisings were fuelled by the genuinely desperate situation in the countryside, and increasing doubts about the creaking Poor Law.[124] By the summer of 1830, when itinerate labourers arrived in Kent, parish resources were already stretched to deal with hardship among the local poor as well as 'visitors'. In Sevenoaks, the amount of money given out to 'poor men and women on the road' rose to an unprecedented high in July and August

[122] Lord Stanhope, printed address on 'The State of the Country', 1821, CKS U1590 C196/1.
[123] Lord Teynham, 'Plans for Amelioration and Observations on the Condition of the Labouring Classes', paper sent to the Duke of Wellington, April 1830, USSC WP1/1108/24.
[124] See ch. 6.2.iii.

1830 of over a £1 per month.[125] Twenty-six further parishes in West Kent also reported high payouts, which they were destitute of any means to provide, and they had only enough bread-corn to last a few more weeks. In at least four parishes - Staplehurst, Frittenden, Smarden, and Headcorn - this meant half their populations, or more, were on the verge of starvation. As for Lord Teynham and others, the sense of foreboding was apocalyptic. A shared memorial from the twenty-six parish officials declared that the crisis was so 'alarming' and the 'evil' so extensive that they would soon be 'swept' into a 'general vortex of destruction'.[126]

The sense of fear was tangible, and not unfounded: within weeks, sporadic incendiarism would become a nightly epidemic. Nevertheless, as Carl Griffin has shown, in his detailed account of the interventions of Sir Edward Knatchbull, even at this stage, the responses of the elite could be influenced by many complex ideological factors. Knatchbull's actions, in sentencing the Lower Hardres machine breakers to four days imprisonment rather than the maximum seven-year transportation, were tempered by the genuine fear of reprisal and the pull of the quasi-familial 'bonds' of local community. While he enraged farmers and central government, the notoriously 'lenient' sentences were interpreted by local labourers as a vindication of their actions.[127]

[125] St Georges, Sevenoaks, Overseers Records, Vestry Orders 1830, CKS P330B/5, 29.
[126] Copy of a Memorial presented to the Lords of his Majesty's Treasury by the deputies from 26 parishes in the County of Kent, 9/6/1830, USSC WP1/1119/3. Similar sentiments are expressed in a Petition from Boughton Malherbe, West Kent Quarter Sessions, Midsummer 1830, CKS Q/Sbw, 1830.
[127] Carl Griffin, 'Policy on the Hoof'.

vi. The 'Agricultural Interest' and 'Protection'

Not all members of the 'agricultural interest' located the cure for social ills in the restoration of 'yeomen' society. Dominant groupings and individuals among Kentish farmers were generally inclined to measure the successful working of society with high profits, thus the decline was less one of 'paternalist' values than the result of the low prices and government duties since 1815.[128] To them the 'golden age' was located in the boom time period of the war.[129] Nevertheless, they usually were far from Malthusians, and with only a few exceptions rabid anti-Smithites, bitterly opposing free-trade. While farmers wrote their various opinions and letters to all of the Kentish newspapers, the *Maidstone Journal* came the closest to representing their views. In response to the poverty of 1830, for example, the *Journal* advocated a form of in-house relief, rather than cash to discourage 'idlers' from shirking industry, but followed 'Country Party' lines in arguing that free-trade was the enemy rather than the solution.[130] It could be, then, a uniting issue between landlords and tenants. Indeed, at the county meeting of March 1830, landlords and tenants agreed it was free-trade that had ruined 'this once happy and prosperous land' and unanimous calls were made for the heightening of agricultural 'protection'.[131]

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[128] This did not mean that all farmers were operating in a strictly 'capitalist' fashion. Mick Reed has suggested that many of the smaller tenant farmers operated only partially in a capitalist, cash-reliant, method and still relied on exchange in kind and other pre-capitalist techniques in their business operations, Mick Reed, 'Introduction', in Reed and Wells eds., *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside.*

[129] PP 1833, Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee on Agriculture, evidence of John Cramp and John Neve, 151-161; Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*, 139.

[130] *MJKA* 3/11/1829, 24/11/1829.

[131] Notices and papers on 1830 public meeting, CKS U1590 C200/3; *MJKA*, 4/5/1830; *Morning Herald*, 13/3/1830; *MJKA* 16/3/1830.

The campaigns surrounding agricultural 'protection' and free-trade in the economically unstable period following 1815 were an important area in which regionally-based interest groups were forming. There was little agreement among the many different sections of the agricultural community about how the slumping economy should be rectified. Nevertheless, as a group they demanded *more* 'protection', demands increasing as the operation of the laws was questioned in parliament by 'free-traders' such as Huskisson.[132] A 'protectionist' movement was organised centrally by George Webb Hall's Farmers Association, and gathered apace in the 1810s.[133] It was dependent upon local, subsidiary action, and the landed interest in the provinces proved very capable of organising themselves. In Kent in 1818, 40,000 signatures were collected against the Corn Laws, and farmers and landlords organised numerous local meetings.[134]

Prominent in the 'protection' campaigns in Kent were James Ellis, one of the largest hop growers in England at the time and, in its early stages, Thomas Law Hodges. The movement also had increasingly wide support from the tenant farmers of the region and became an important issue at election time, particularly after 1832.[135] Although seemingly a 'dry' matter of duties and levies, these complex

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[132] Wordie, 'Perceptions and Reality', 51; Bentley, *Politics without Democracy, 1815-1914*, 14-15, 26; Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-1830* (Oxford University Press, 1980). For the specific state of Kentish agriculture in this period, see Mingay, 'Agriculture', in Armstrong ed., *Economy of Kent*, 72-73.

[133] Crosby, *Farmers and the Politics of Protection*, 32-33.

[134] Crosby, *Farmers and the Politics of Protection*, 26-27, 34; *MJKA*, 18/1/1820.

[135] Thomas Law Hodges' ambiguous stance on free-trade, supporting laissez-faire policies in timber, alongside the maintenance of the sliding scale of duties on corn, led to his downfall as parliamentary representative of West Kent, in 1841, when he withdrew from the election. Poster: 'To the Electors of West Kent', 5/6/1841, CKS U49/C29; Brian Atkinson, 'Conservative and

issues evoked strong emotions. The threatened 'agricultural interest' was constructed as the 'national' interest, against those of industrialists and 'radicals'. In 1820, George Webb Hall aired his views on the collective grievances of the agricultural sector in the *Kentish Gazette*, which was fuelled by resentment at the demands of the poor law upon the agricultural sector:

> ...we are unquestionably the most numerous class of inhabitants in the kingdom, possessing deceptively the largest capital of any class seeking to gain a livelihood by skill, capital and labour; employing unquestionably the greatest number of labourers ourselves; and maintaining, almost exclusively, all the labourers of every other class, not employed by their own masters'.[136]

The publication of this address was swiftly followed by action on the part of Ellis and other agriculturists to set up the West Kent Agricultural Association.[137] County meetings and the founding of various other societies followed. Addresses to Freeholders were predominant in these campaigns, but the scope of the meetings increasingly involved farmers in what was seen as a 'county' interest.[138] Streams of correspondence poured into the county newspapers, the vast majority of which fell into the pro-'protectionist' camp, such as the weekly letters from 'Agricola' in the early 1820s.[139] In 1826, a pro-'protectionist' frenzy was stirred up in the *Kentish Gazette* by a broadside launched upon the free-traders by the eccentric scion of one

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Liberal: National Politics in Kent from the Late 1820s to 1914', in Hume, Yates and Hastings eds., *Religion and Politics in Kent*, 161.

[136] *MJKA*, 18/1/1820.

[137] *MJKA*, 1/2/1820.

[138] *KG*, 25/12/1821.

[139] *KG*, 12/1/1821.

of the 'ancient' Kentish families, Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges.[140] In a follow-up to Brydges 'protectionist' pamphlet, a correspondent declared that '... the question does not lie betwixt the landlord and the people generally but betwixt persons who live on fixed incomes, annuities, which charges etc., and the manufacturers solely for foreign consumption and a few professional men; and landlords, farmers and remains of mankind on the other'.[141] Brydges himself drew the lines of battle even more firmly, stating, in stirring prose, that if one believed the nation would benefit from 'the golden dreams of positive new manufacturers', one 'might as well believe that an enemy will, in the midst of the siege, while assaulting by fire and sword, shout that he came as a friend'.[142]

'Protectionism' positioned the men of rural England not just against foreign rivals, but against manufacturers, leading to the assertions that 'free-trade' threatened 'Old England'.[143] The men of Birmingham's idea of freedom and liberty, for example, could be directly asserted as the 'yeomen of Kent's' doom. A letter from 'a farmer' to the *Maidstone Journal* in 1832, lamented that the looming Reform Act was wanted only by free-traders such as the Birmingham Political Union: '...should this measure be carried to the extent proposed....a Yeomen of Kent may hereafter be found on the page of history, but he will be sought in vain upon the surface of the

[140] S. E. Brydges, *A Brief Inquiry into the Principles and Provisions of the Law and Constitution of England Regarding the Protection of the Rights of Peerages Inheritable under a Common Law Creation, etc.* (London: c. 1826), BL. For more on the 'ancient' Kentish families, see ch. 4.2.i.
[141] *KG*, 21/7/1826, 1/9/1826.
[142] *KG*, 22/8/1826; for a similar formulation, see *Canterbury Weekly Journal and Farmers Gazette*, 25/11/1837.
[143] For the positioning of British farmers against foreign rivals, see Avna Offer, 'Foreign Farming in British Eyes', in Negley Harte and Roland Quinault, eds., *Land and Society in Britain, 1700-1914.*

soil'.[144] Like wider ideologies of 'Old England', this was not a purely 'Kentish' phenomenon. J. Benet, MP for Wiltshire, for example, told the Commons in 1822 that the import of foreign grain would render England a land purely of manufacturers and would 'reduce and deprave the yeomanry'.[145] It was a cause that united the middling and upper echelons of the landed interest, and fostered a sense of unity and belonging among a large portion of the elite 'landed interest' until the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

Many of the above ideological forces, then, were not peculiar to Kent and are best analysed within the context of the wider responses in provincial southern England, or even agrarian England in general. Nevertheless, the specificities of location and place defined particular ways in which groups and individuals responded to social, political and economic changes and made sense of their place in time and history.

vii. The Napoleonic Wars

Of arguably the greatest significance to perceptions of time and place in *Kent* in this period, and deeply related to the matters of economic and social change, were experiences and memory of the 'Great War': that is, the various conflicts against revolutionary France and Napoleon between 1794 and 1815. In Kent, and arguably throughout maritime southern England, experiences of the war were heightened. In the years of invasion threats, Kent was indeed the front line: of the hilltop beacons

[144] *MJKA*, 25/10/1831.
[145] *The Times*, 8/5/1822. Much of the pro-Corn Law literature in the Wellington Pamphlets also supports this stance. See, for example, Anon., *General remarks on the state of the poor and poor laws, and the circumstances affecting their condition viz. game laws, currency, free-trade, tithes, corn laws, alehouses, &c* (London: 1832), USSC Wellington Pamphlets, 980/1.

to be lit as a sign of invasion, more were in Kent than any other county. Gunfire from the continent could be heard from its coastal towns.[146] The military presence was phenomenal. Martello Towers sprung up all along the coast, and the line of forts was built along the North Downs.[147] During the invasion scare of 1801, according to J. E. Cookson, about one sixth of the army and militia were concentrated in Kent and Sussex, and by 1803-5, that number had increased to around a third. Even as late as 1811, around a quarter to a third was still barracked in the region.[148]

Volunteer soldiering played a central role in elite and popular culture, and was an important part of patriotism from the early 1790s onwards.[149] As Linda Colley has demonstrated, Kent, along with other maritime counties, attained high levels of military volunteering during the wars. In May 1804, 49% of the eligible population were 'Men at Arms'.[150] Colley partly explains this by proximity to the Channel coast, and thus nearer the threat of invasion, and of stronger military traditions, a

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[146] Tom Pocock, *The Terror Before Trafalgar. Nelson, Napoleon and the Secret War* (London: John Murray, 2003), 121; N. Longmate, *Island Fortress. The Defence of Great Britain*, 1603-1945 (London: Pimlico, 2001), 278-9, 290.

[147] Sheila Sutcliffe, *Martello Towers* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), 46-7.

[148] Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, 41.

[149] Kevin Linch, 'The British Volunteer Movement and the War against Napoleon', paper delivered at a conference on 'War Experiences and Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Contemporary Perception' (German Historical Institute, London, 24/2/2006-25/2/2006). Linch suggests that wartime volunteers were exposed to large amounts of patriotic propaganda, but that the wider national identities they engaged were most powerful when focussed on local or regimental loyalties. With regard to masculinities and the eighteenth-century military, Matthew McCormack has explored the complex relationship between soldiering, voluntary and otherwise, and ideas about masculinity and civil virtue in the mid-eighteenth century, and suggested that this can reveal 'strong connections between personal virtue, physical virility, and masculine mastery in Georgian evaluations of their polity', Matthew McCormack, 'Citizenship, Nationhood and Masculinity in the Affair of the Hanoverian Soldier, 1756', *The Historical Journal,* vol. 49, no. 4 (2006).

[150] Colley, *Britons*, Appendix 2: 'Men at Arms throughout Great Britain, May 1804', 400-401. For analysis, see 302-309. For an analysis with less specific attention given to Kent, see Cookson, *The British Armed Nation,* 226-227.

hypothesis further supported by the 53% of the population being 'Men at Arms' at this time in the Cinque Ports, and the phenomenal 68% from the Isle of Wight.[151]

The Kentish elite in this period was, if anything, overly keen to organise. In 1793, initial fears of invasion led to rumours that extra voluntary militia bodies would be set up. The dominant families of East Kent, including the Knatchbulls and the Honeywoods, organised meetings and swiftly established several volunteer Corps of Horse. Although their efforts were eventually incorporated into the official volunteers, they were mildly chastised by Dundas for not waiting for the instructions to proceed.[152] The 'yeomen-farmers' of the region, who were motivated by a genuine sense of threat, endorsed their actions. Isle of Thanet farmer, John Mockett, for example, swiftly enrolled in his local troop of Yeomanry. Following the advice of Pitt for the defence of the Cinque Ports, he also stationed 'ten men with pick-axes and pikes' at the gateway to his farm.[153]

Kentish men and women faced a real threat of invasion, and the volunteers mustered on several occasions when the French fleet was falsely signalled.[154] A large proportion of the Militia and Yeomanry went on to see overseas action. From the West Kent Militia alone, around 1,300 men transferred to the line between 1805 and 1815, joining 'many hundreds' who had volunteered since 1799.[155] For the

[151] Colley, *Britons*, Appendix 2: Men at Arms throughout Great Britain, May 1804, 400-401.
[152] G.R.C. Harris, *A Century of Yeoman Service* (Ashford: The Kentish Express, 1899), 169-187.
[153] Mockett, *Mockett's Journal*, 58-59.
[154] Records of the Royal East Kent Yeomanry, CKS EKY/AG1.
[155] J. Bonhote, *Historical Records of the West Kent Militia* (London: 1909), 187, 253. Volunteering from the Militia to the regular forces is discussed in Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, 110, 113-118.

Kentish elite, some experience of defending the nation under circumstances of genuine threat was the norm. Most of those prominent in post-war county politics 'came of age', as it were, during the Napoleonic conflicts. Ex-military men from the navy and the army were prevalent among the corpus of MPs who sat for the boroughs of Kent between 1815 and 1837. All of the county MPs served, during the war and after, in volunteer forces.[156]

Volunteering was not, of course, universally popular. Counteracting the many declarations of loyalty is evidence that many of those balloted by the Militia paid substitutes where possible.[157] Hardship was also experienced during the war. The high prices may have benefited farmers, but they also meant unaffordable food for poorer people, and shortages led to famine conditions in 1794-5 and then again in 1800 to 1801. According to Roger Wells, this crisis, ignored by historians, reveals the 'fragile equilibrium underlying national subsistence' in the wartime years.[158]

The war also impacted on the distribution of population in the county. The lathe of St Augustine, which included the corner of the county protruding towards the rest of Europe and the seaports of Dover and Deal, contained many military installations and camps, and thus saw a large increase in population between 1801

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[156] A full breakdown of the men who served as M.P.s for the county of Kent between 1820 and 1847 (post 1832 for East or West Kent) can be found in J. Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 12.

[157] Cookson, *The British Armed Nation.* While members of the Kentish elite were keen to join the prestigious Yeomanry, the humble Militia was not so appealing. In 1803, when Magistrate John Cator tried to muster the West Kent Militia at the Bell Inn, Bromley, his son, John Cator Jr. chose to pay a £20 fine to excuse himself. Records of the West Kent Militia, Bromley Local History Library, 611/2, 6/8/1803.

[158] Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces. Famine in Wartime England, 1793-1803* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), 2-3.

and 1811, which tailed off thereafter. The lathe of Sutton at Hone, the part of the county nearest London, excluding the areas of densely populated suburban growth, saw a drastic decrease of population in the same period: the number of people went from 74,033 in 1801 to only 54,000, and did not recover its 1801 levels until 1831. Of course, Britain was already at war in 1801, and the fluctuations of the agricultural economy were undoubtedly an important factor, nevertheless, it does suggest that the war had a significant impact on populations and the movements of people in Kent.[159]

viii. Post-war Decline?

So how did the war influence conceptions of time and place in Kent in the following years? As will be discussed later, a great sense of pride was felt about Kent's role during the recent Napoleonic conflicts, which was often placed in the 'romantic' and 'perennialist' context of the 'Men of Kent's' resistance to many potential conquerors in the past, including the Normans and even the Romans. However, if the 'Men of Kent' were, at least partially, defined by their martial prowess, how would they be reconfigured in the time of peace? As Philip Shaw has observed, the euphoria of victory in 1815 was followed by a moment of great national insecurity. How could this monumental achievement be followed by anything other than decline?[160]

[159] PP 1800, Population Act, 158; 1811 Population Act, 148; 1821 Population Act, 148; 1831 Population Act, 280. For a recent discussion of population fluctuations in agrarian England, with particular focus on Kent, see Reay, *Rural Englands*, ch. 5.

[160] For the impact of Waterloo on the culture of the immediate post-war years, see Shaw, *Waterloo into the Romantic Imagination*, 4, 34.

On a basic level, Kent had been the focus of intense military activity, and all its entourages, for many years, and inevitably there was a loss of excess population and trade and custom, that could not fail to penetrate local economies. A sense of decline after the war was certainly 'felt' in some of Kent's towns, heightened by the decline of military presence and the extra trade that would have entailed for local businesses. This was true of Rochester, where there was no manufacturing, only retail tradesmen and brewers. An atmosphere of crumbling stagnation was observed by the Municipal Corporation investigators in 1835, and was captured later in the century by Dickens in *Great Expectations* (1860-1) and the *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870).[161] The prosperity of Rochester was overshadowed by Chatham; there were problems also in the Chatham dockyard, suffering from a loss of custom.[162] A canal cut from the Thames to the Medway to increase trade was 'unsuccessful', and 'skilled' shipwrights faced hardships, being made to work alongside convicts at 'unskilled' labour.[163] A nostalgia for the prosperity, and indeed the excitement, of the war years was also detected by the investigators in Canterbury, who commented that persons in the town felt there had been regression, which could only be detected in comparison with the period 'during and shortly after' the war when a ' large body of the military' had been stationed there and 'communication with the continent took place from Dover'.[164] Another area, in

[161] PP 1835, Municipal Corporations, 864.
[162] Ibid.
[163] J.M.Haas, 'Work and Authority in the Royal Dockyards from the Seventeenth Century to 1870', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* vol. 124, no.6 (1980), 425.
[164] PP 1835, Municipal Corporations, 709.

which the cessation of the conflicts was lamented, as has been discussed earlier, was the loss of wartime high prices and prosperity in agriculture.[165]

The military, however, remained an important part of 'Kentish' culture. In the higher social circles, officers, current and retired, were prominent members of society.[166] At balls, and around the tables in public houses, retired officers enthralled listeners with their tales of heroics. William Benge, a Londoner holiday making in Margate in 1837, was entertained by the stories of Lieutenant Colonel Clarke CB, who was 'decorated with orders British and foreign' and who commanded the Scarlet Greys at Waterloo after the death of Sir William Ponsonby. Admiration and curiosity, however, did not equate to financial security for the tellers of the stories. The Lieutenant Colonel's current impoverished state evoked great pity in Benge, as he was now struggling to support his family on half pay and seeking appointments where he could.[167] This state of affairs was far from a rare experience; some ex-military men needed to exploit their status as war heroes as an attempt to eke out a living. A group of such men set up a military pleasure garden near Margate in 1824, know as the 'Camp in the Wilderness', where visitors could enjoy a military themed camp and bazaar, accompanied by a military band playing

[165] Everitt attributes the boom in farm building around the turn-of-the-century to the prosperity of the wars, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', 29.
[166] Amongst the most prominent politicians in the period 1828 to 1832 were General Harris, General Mulcaster, Major Wayath, and Colonel Stratford, all of whom served in non-voluntary corps. For their political participation, and debates about the prominence of soldiers in politics that were heightened by criticism of Wellington during his tenure as Prime Minister, see *The Times,* 18/9/1828, 16/10/1828; *MGKC*, 2/11/1830.
[167] Diary entry, 19/9/1837, in D.R. Oliver ed., *The Diary of William Benge* (Broadstairs: D.R. Oliver, 1994), 22.

martial music.[168] In 1833, however, after an apparent expansion, the old soldiers' application for a license was turned down by Margate Corporation. The proprietor wrote hopefully to the Duke of Wellington for some patronage: 'Your grace will smile without doubt at the self denominated Commander in Chief of the Camp, but we are here, all soldiers, whether of the peninsular or Waterloo'.[169] Wellington replied sympathetically, and with a self-confessed 'sense of duty', but claimed he was unable to intervene on the former soldier's behalf.[170] Civilians and soldiers also mixed in the less respectable drinking spots, sometimes with violent consequences.[171]

Overall, however, the period 1815 to 1837 was not a uniformly negative one for the people of Kent, in terms of prosperity and national significance. By the mid 1830s, there was an overall upturn in the fortunes of Kentish agriculture, the early signs of the mid-Victorian 'golden age' of agriculture.[172] Of the towns, Maidstone, particularly, was in a prosperous state with many new buildings, and Kent maintained its position on the main routes between London and the continent.[173] Nevertheless, improvements in communications did not render the sight of rushing carriages and the arrival of news from London or France any more ordinary. On the contrary, for Robert Cowton, growing up in Canterbury in the 1830s, the first-rate coaches running between Dover and London, which stopped at the better Inns,

[168] Poster: 'The Camp in the Wilderness', 1833, USSC WP2/223/39.
[169] J. Easter to the Duke of Wellington, 23/6/1833, USSC WP2/223/38-9.
[170] J. Easter to the Duke of Wellington, 25/9/1833; the Duke of Wellington to J.Easter, 26/9/1833, USSC WP2/223/83-84.
[171] For disputes between townspeople and troops in the 1820s see PRO HO 40/21, 40/268.
[172] Mingay, 'Agriculture' in Armstrong ed., *Economy of Kent*, 73-75.
[173] PP 1835, Municipal Corporations, 769.

were still an impressive site that made his home seem important. He often stood opposite one of the main coaching inns, revelling at the sight of the 'finest' most 'smart and elegant' horses and 'Tally ho!' coaches in the 'kingdom'.[174] Meanwhile, Kentish towns continued to be the first in England to receive news of key events of the period, notably the French Revolution of 1830.[175]

4. Conclusion

In the early nineteenth century, then, it was far from a tranquil paradise in the 'Garden of England'. Indeed, the 'Vanguard of Liberty' was under attack from many different angles. Rapid economic and social changes, particularly those in the countryside, brought conceptions of time and place into distinctive perspectives that defined the ways in which the region, county and nation - notably agrarian England - were imagined. In Kent and elsewhere, 'Old England' signified the collation of genuine experience of change and the related cultural impulses of the post enlightenment, and post French and American revolutionary age.

For the landed elite, the dominant impulses in national thinking, towards specific conceptions of 'the people' and 'the nation', were configured in a climax of fear about revolutionary upheaval - made all the more pressing by serious outbreaks of domestic unrest - , and a deeply felt nostalgia for the patriarchal social hierarchies of rural England's 'Golden Age' pasts. William Cobbett's 'Old England', articulated through his demands for a more benign social structure, shared many attributes with

[174] Cowton, *Passages from the Autobiography of a Man of Kent*, 30.
[175] The *Kent Herald*, for example, claimed to have been the first English newspaper to report on the revolutions, *KH*, 4/8/1830.

elite 'Old Englanders' such as Stanhope. At the heart of both visions was the figure of the sturdy 'yeomen': symbolic of desired strength of masculine 'Englishness', and of the health of the nation. Discussions of the 'yeoman's' peril in the early nineteenth century were a powerful metaphor of the landed interest's fears for the national future. Not for them were the confident assertions of domestic and imperial progress that were to trip from the pens of Whig commentators and industrialists.[176] Nevertheless, Cobbett's 'Old England', and the small glimpses of plebeian mindsets that his writing arguably represent, were in other ways fundamentally different from that of the landed elite. While the latter asserted the patriotism, inherent 'Englishness' and, in literary representations, even the racial purity of 'Old England', in order to preserve their hegemony within the provinces and at Westminster, Cobbett and the labourers wielded it in attempts to regain the rights and needs they had lost: food and land.

Nationhood in Kent, then, was interlinked with these perceptions of change in the countryside, which had resonance, in varying ways, throughout rural and provincial England. However, national thinking could also be nuanced through the ways in which recent developments had impinged on Kent in particular. The cessation of high levels of military activity in the region during the Napoleonic wars, heightened the sense of change, sometimes manifested as a decline in importance and prosperity, in the post 1815 era. Other peculiarities of location, particularly its proximity to London and its many transport routes, distinguished the experience of living in or visiting the county. Moreover, questions of political and national

[176] Briggs, 'The Crystal Palace and the 'Men of 1851''.

citizenship and representation had their own cultural impulses that could be at least partially divorced from the past, present and future of agriculture. Catholic Emancipation, which spawned huge campaigns in late 1828 and 1829, as the Bill made its way through Parliament, drew upon regional identity, folklore and 'romantic' images of England, and specifically Kent, that emphasised the historicity of its Protestant religion and the latent 'Englishness' of martial resistance to, and independence from, foreign invaders and the Church of Rome.[177]

All of these factors impinged on perceptions of location and place, and influenced perceptions of nationhood. They also imbued Kent itself with a specific 'sense of place'. The next chapter will turn attention to how, against this tumultuous backdrop, the identity of the county was represented.

[177] Kathryn Beresford, 'The 'Men of Kent' and the Penenden Heath Meeting, 1828', *Archaeologia Cantiana* vol. 125 (2005), 151-171.

Chapter Three: 'Garden of England' and 'Vanguard of Liberty': Representations of People and Place

1.Introduction

Kent was imbued with a specific 'sense of place' by its agricultural economy and its militarily and communicatively strategic location, between London and Europe. Awareness of distinctive identities associated with agrarian England, in general, and the county in particular, was heightened by the recent wars with France, and their cessation, and the massive structural developments that took place in the second half of the eighteenth century. These situated imaginings of the nation and the county within specific conceptualisations of time and change.

Prevailing configurations of knowledge about the people and landscape of Kent were intrinsically linked to these significant factors, and to the exercise of power on a regional, national and international level. The regional hegemony of the landed interest, the inherent instability of which was articulated through the ideologies of 'Old England', was sustained by idealised depictions of Kent's enclosed landscape, and of the 'Garden of England's' legendary opulence. The two male figures associated with the county - the 'yeoman' and the 'Man of Kent' - symbolised the value of working and defending one's own land, and of a well-ordered, hierarchical society. The latter, particularly, was an ideal subject for loyalist propaganda in the Napoleonic wars, and upheld the Loyalist values of Imperial supremacy, Church, King and Constitution in the tumultuous

following decades. Meanwhile, subservient depictions of women, epitomised by the cherry-lipped 'Maids of Kent', underpinned their peripheral role in regional conceptions of nationhood. This chapter, then, considers the representational strategies, and the gendered landscapes of knowledge, shared by many of Kent's chroniclers, from government agents through to the purveyors of folklore.

2. 'Garden of England'

i. Literary Landscapes

Many beautiful images are conjured up by the notion of rural Kent. Never a wild, untamed landscape, like the Lake District, despite the presence of soaring white cliffs, gloomy marshes and, indeed, of 'dark satanic mills', the predominant image of Kent was prototypically 'south country': agrarian and pastoral, cultivated and fertile.[1] This was a county of fields and little undulating hills, very much under the hand of man: beautiful, often feminine, and controlled. The well-established patchworks of fields associated with enclosure, particular those visible in the much-viewed areas near to Maidstone and Canterbury were much celebrated.[2] Nevertheless, in terms of geographical dominance, these vistas were not 'typical'. The markets gardens and, particularly, the distinctive 'hop clothed valleys' beloved by poets were of recent precedent, and made up just a small proportion of the Kentish countryside.[3]

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[1] For a discussion of the emergence of the 'South country' as epitomising 'Englishness' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England'.
[2] F. W. Jessop, *History of Kent* (Chichester: Phillimore and Co. Ltd, 1974), 112.
[3] See for example, N. T. Carrington, 'To friends in Kent' in *From the Banks of the Tamar*, 1828. Quoted in Julia H.N. De Vaynes, ed., *A Kentish Garland*, vol. 1 (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1881), 200; The hop gardens and rolling hills are comparable to the 'South Country' and

Kentish farmers lamented the deterioration of the land, and that vast swathes of it were going out of cultivation.[4] Yet the oft-used phrase that summed up images of Kent remained, throughout this period, the 'garden of England'.

By the early nineteenth century, links between 'Englishness', pastoral landscapes of prettily varied enclosures, and a 'rural idyll' were well-established.[5] In paintings and literature alike, from Constable and Turner through to Jane Austen, beautiful country landscapes were often bereft of people, despite the fact that, in this period, the countryside was still highly populated.[6] When they did appear, according to John Barrell and Lynda Neal, the rural poor perpetuated the historicist 'myth of old England', filling idealized roles of 'peasant' and 'yeomen' in a peaceful, familial conception of hierarchical communities.[7]

Inherent tensions, of course, underlay any depiction of 'rural idyll' as epitomising 'Englishness'. In the 1820s and 1830s, these antagonisms concerned the implicit negation of Empire and industrial England and, maybe more pressingly, the existence of poverty and conflict in rural and provincial England

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Cotswold vistas that represented 'Englishness' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Brace, '*Finding England Everywhere*'.

[4] PP 1833 Agriculture, testimonies of John Neve, John Cramp and William Taylor, 244, 259, 290.

[5] Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (London:Thames & Hudson, 1987); John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape. The Rural Poor in English painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 5; John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination. English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997).

[6] Reay, *Rural Englands*, 3.

[7] John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape;* Lynda Neal, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 42; for a discussion on the rise of ideologies of 'Merrie England' in relation to idealised visions of the English landscape, see Mandler, "In the Olden Time': Romantic History and the English National Identity', 78-92.

itself.[8] Artists thus 'naturalised' social relationships in attempts to justify the effects of enclosure and the other, widespread, changes in the social and physical structure of the countryside that had been imposed over recent decades.[9] Representations of rural England were also gendered. Under what Gillian Rose has described as the 'masculine gaze', the countryside could be 'feminised', perceived as an exploitable subaltern, easily shaped by the 'reasonable' will of middling and upper-class man. Women, and socially inferior men, were marginalized and powerless.[10] Such depictions appealed to the bourgeoisie, but they also had great resonance with the landed aristocracy who framed such scenes in gilt and placed them on their walls in their country estates.[11] All these matters, in regionally specific ways, distinguished depictions of Kent.

ii. Garden of England

A knowledge of the specificities of Kent as the 'Garden of England' can be found in many of its major chroniclers, including Dickens, Barham, Gleig and Cobbett. This literary county identity was early, if not unique. According to Jeremy Burchardt, the 'roots of regionalism in the 'English' literary tradition' can be found with Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels, but did not reach fruition until Hardy's 'Wessex' revolutionised rurally-located literature in the late

[8] Roger Ebbatson, *An Imaginary England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 8, 19.
[9] Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 2-3.
[10] Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 7.
[11] A famous example is the collection of pictures acquired by the Egremonts at Petworth, which contain many pastoral scenes including W.F.Witherington's Fete and Petworth Park, depicting the labourers' dinner (1836). The Egremonts were also close friends of the landscape artist Turner, whom they patronised and who regularity visited the house, Christopher Rowell, *Turner at Petworth* (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 21.

nineteenth century.[12] Kent's canonical works in the early nineteenth century, indeed, usually lacked the impact and realism of the later works of Blackmore or Hardy, although this did not detract from their 'sense of place'. Moreover, contrary to many depictions of generic 'Englishness', Kent was rarely depicted as a depopulated landscape. They may have often been represented as contented 'yeomen', but spectres of people, whether current or historical, were prevalent.

Charles Dickens was not blind to the poverty and diversity present in the Kentish countryside, particularly in his later works. This is illustrated by the desperate condition of the hop-pickers encountered by David Copperfield on the road between Canterbury and Dover.[13] Even later, he produced particularly haunting images of the north Kent marshes, the first really extensive literary depiction of them, in *Great Expectations*.[14] In his earlier writings, however, Dickens picks Kent as the location of the particularly idealised, rural beauty of the county of his early childhood, juxtaposed with the horrors of the capital, which had been imposed upon him in his early youth.[15] Among the many loving references to the county in *The Pickwick Papers* are those in the tale of George Heyling and his doomed wife, Mary. Consigned to debtor's prison, Mary realises she and her child will die in the 'wretched' squalor of London. She begs George that 'if ever you leave this dreadful place...you will have us removed to

[12] Jeremy Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, 68-69.
[13] Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 1849 (New York: Signet, 1962), 193-4. The description of a particularly vicious hop-picker as a 'Tinker' suggests possible Irish origins, although this term was also generally applied to itinerant beggars and tradesmen. <http://dictionary.oed.com>
[14] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 1860-1861 (Ware: Wordsworth Edition, 1992), 6.
[15] Dickens's impressions of Kent, although complex, were still defined by the two overriding factors of Kentishness, the agrarian and the military, Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens*, 21-25.

some quiet country churchyard, a long, long way off'. From this urban hell, Dickens paints Kent as their rural heaven: He writes: '...in one of the most peaceful and secluded churchyards in Kent, where wild flowers mingle with the grass, and the soft landscape around forms the fairest spot in the garden of England, lie the bones of the young mother with her gentle child'.[16] Dickens thus defined an irony-free corner of the 'garden of England', possibly derived from the nostalgic haze of childhood memories, where moral and physical strife were negated.

The tropes of prototype 'south country', set in contrast with the apparent 'artificiality' of the Great Wen, were detectable in the writings on Kent of William Cobbett.[17] *Rural Rides* depicts diversity in Kent, as elsewhere, commenting on good and poor land, and on prosperity and poverty. Unsurprisingly, he wrote many very complementary passages about areas in other counties, including his native Surrey and Hampshire.[18] Like Dickens and others, however, Cobbett identified the best of 'Englishness' within Kent's borders, citing the market-garden countryside near Maidstone as among the finest:

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[16] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 1837, 280.

[17] Cobbett's dislike of London is well documented, and he comments in *Rural Rides* (1830) that when he reaches Beckenham, the last proper parish in Kent, the countryside adopts an 'artificial', 'Cockney-like' air, and he is no longer interested in it, William Cobbett, *Rural Rides,* A new edition with notes by Pitt Cobbett. 2 vols. (London: Reeves & Turner, 1908), vol. 1, 332.

[18] Cobbett also waxes lyrical on the varied landscape, arable nature, and enclosed fields and woodlands of South Wilts. Surrey, however, also gave Cobbett an example of 'ugly' land, in Ashurst Forest, which is unenclosed, and infertile: '... the most villainously ugly spot I ever saw in England.... barren soil, nasty spewy gravel, heath and even that stunted... black, ragged, hideous rocks', Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, 84, 96, 137. In his Huntingdon journal, Cobbett noted that a particularly beautiful set of enclosed fields near Huntingdon, were said to resemble those 'at and near Faversham in Kent', 21-22/1/1822, accessed online at <www.visionofbritain.com>

> This is what the people of Kent call the Garden of Eden...a district of meadows, corn-fields, hop-gardens, and orchards of apples, pears, cherries etc and filberts, with very little if any land which cannot, with propriety, be called good. There are plantations of Chesnut and of Ash frequently occurring; and as these are but long enough to make poles for hops, they are at all times objects of great beauty...(of the seven miles from Maidstone to Merryworth) these are the finest seven miles that I have ever seen in England or anywhere else.[19]

While Cobbett comments on the fertility of the land, it is also the variety found within the panorama and its produce that endears him. His love of small-scale vistas, cultivated and, indeed, *enclosed* landscapes is well documented, despite his much vocalised criticisms of recent structural changes and the greediness of large landowners and farmers.[20] In Cobbett's eyes, patchworks of enclosed fields signified agriculture improvement and the landscape near to Maidstone provided these in abundance. His gaze perceived a 'garden', shaped to its very core by the hand of man, and rendering Kent's prospect as the epitome of the post-enclosure scenery, which increasingly typified 'Englishness'.[21]

The environs near Maidstone and Boxley, including the county meeting ground of Penenden Heath, were often singled out for praise as a particularly garden-like area of the 'garden of England', and a source of county pride.[22] Denigration caused consternation. Indeed, the *Guide to Maidstone* took issue with a recent 'penny publication' that suggested that the 'romantic and pretty village of

[19] William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, 1830, vol. 1, 327.
[20] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination,* 625.
[21] Ibid.
[22] For a discussion of Penenden Heath, see ch. 4.3.ii; *MJKA* 4/11/1828

Boxley, nestling under the green hills of Kent' may have actually been located in a 'barren and dreary country covered with flints...more healthy than pleasant in consequence of its... bleak exposure'.[23] R.S. Surtees, on the other hand, noted the contrasts.[24] 'Kent is a beautiful county', he observed:

> ...the trimly kept gardens, and the clustering vines twining around the neatly thatched cottages, remind one of the rich, luxuriant soil and climate of the South...we continued to saunter on, across one field, over one stile and then over another.... passing by the side of a snug-looking old-fashioned house, with a beautifully kept garden.[25]

With the eye of a huntsman, however, he also noted in Kent and Surrey the problematic 'abundance of large woods' and flinty, 'mountainous hills'.[26]

For George Robert Gleig, Kent was a county of fields and gently rising hills, beautiful, feminine, and controlled. He locates the 'romantic' village of Waltham as: 'planted at the foot of one of those undulating hills which Kent, above all other southern counties, abounds', and highlights the 'luxuriant hop gardens, fields...of yellow corn, hedgerows dividing one parcel of land from

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[23] Douglas Allport, *Maidstone, its History, Traditions and Associations Discussed in a Memoir* (Hall and Sons: Maidstone, 1842), 6. L. Fussell in an 1818 tourist guide also contradicted the image of prosperity and cultivation by noting the 'uncultivated' landscape, despite the good soil, on the allegedly prosperous Isle of Thanet. He was, however, in a fishing area, noting that the 'inhabitants look on the sea as their garden', L.Fussell, *The Journey around the Coast of Kent* (London: Baldwin, Craddock and Jay, 1818), 80.

[24] R.S.Surtees, *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities*, 1843 (London: George Routledge, 1869). Surtees was a member of the Northumberland gentry who became known for his satirical accounts of sporting life in the 1830s and 1840s. He observed the manners and behaviour of the rural elite with a deft feel for the particularities of place, including the differences between the naturally riding 'Yorkshireman' and the leisurely Foxhunters of Surrey. His eyes drifted, on occasion, onto the people and landscape of Kent, Norman Gash, *Robert Surtees and Early Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[25] Surtees, *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities,* 281-2.

[26] Surtees, *Jorrocks'*, 2.

another'. Gleig's 'Kentish' landscapes, as was typical, were populated ones. He also complemented the neat tertiary structure of this rural society, accommodating labourer, farmer and squire: 'here and there', he wrote, 'we find a farmhouse, a gentleman's seat, a cluster of cottages...'.[27]

This hierarchical, yet peaceful, landscape and people were also emphasised in Richard Barham's *Ingoldsby Legends*, with its references to Kent's feudal past.[28] *Ingoldsby* was full of descriptions of ancient ruins, many of which were still in evidence, and of their former inhabitants. Of equal importance to castles, were the ruins of the abbeys, and the physical evidence of the power held over the land by the church. Barham sets 'The Witches Frolic', a tale of magic in the days of 'King James' in the remains of a Preceptory, a 'grey ruin...a tottering wall', 'once belonging to the Knights Templars'. Barham locates his 'romantic' ruin firmly in the present Kentish landscape. It is 'near Swingfield Minnis', he informs us, on 'a rough tract of common land now undergoing the process of enclosure...the time-worn walls in question, as seen over the intervening coppices, present a picturesque and striking object'.[29] Outside fiction, historians and writers of travel literature also observed a harmony of nature and history.

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[27] Gleig, *The Chronicles of Waltham.* See also W.H.Ireland, *England's Topography or a New and Complete History of the County of Kent, from the Earliest Records to the Present Time. Including every Modern Improvement* (London: George Virtue, 1828), vol. 1, 110. Ireland waxes lyrical about the Weald, often represented as the less fertile part of the County: ' the enclosures of corn and meadow land, elegant seats, mansions, and villages, promiscuously interspersed among the towering oaks, scattered among the champagne county...'.

[28] Richard Harris Barham, *The Ingoldsby Legends or, Mirth and Marvels. By Thomas Ingoldsby Esq.* 1836. (London: Ward, Lock & Co.,1889). See particularly, 'Grey Dolphin: A Legend of Sheppey', which is centred upon the knights and barons of Shurland Castle, 333- 353.

[29] Barham, *Ingoldsby Legends,* 26-27.

For example, in his 1828 *History of Kent*, W.H. Ireland integrated the cultivated, prosperous 'rural idyll' of the present with Kent's fortified and feudal past:

> ...on every side, one is arrested by scattered village spires, the country seats of the affluent, and monastic and castellated ruins; while the rich woodland, the verdant pasturage, the arable soil, and the light green of the hop grounds, intersected by translucent waters, display, on all sides, the richly embroidered carpets of prolific nature... it must unquestioningly be allowed that Kent does not, on the score of commercial intercourse, yield the palm of precedence to any other part of Great Britain.[30]

To the author of a *Guide to Maidstone,* a perusal of the landscape transported him to a world that echoed contemporary fashions for chivalry, gothic revival, and the then popular novels of Sir Walter Scott. He wrote that one would envisage the 'sturdy Saxons and Britons struggling for mastery', and the 'Oaks of Kent' would again be 'resonant with the horn of the swineherd, the rush of the fear-winged hog, and the gentle droppings of acorns on the mossy turf that carpeted the wild glades of your ancestral forest'.[31] The remaining forests, of course, were one aspect of the nineteenth-century landscape that had persisted from the mediaeval period.

Overall, then, representations of the 'garden of England' were varied, cultivated, fertile and prosperous, and grounded in a far-reaching and overtly 'romantic' history. When experience undermined this aspect, tensions were inevitable. For some, the image of peculiar prosperity associated with Kent, provided comfort

[30] Ireland, *England's Topography,* vol. 1, 3.
[31] Allport, *Maidstone,* 26.

in times of hardship. According to the *Maidstone Journal,* in the harsh winter of 1829, the 'distress' around Maidstone was 'very great, but we feel happy in the belief that those who Providence has blessed with abundance' will overcome this with 'greater triumph that anyone else'.[32] For William Cobbett, however, the contrast between the opulence of the landscape and the poverty of its people was a political matter in itself. Indeed, the 'beggarly' state of the people and their houses on the Isle of Thanet, often noted as among the most fertile and prosperous parts of the county, led Cobbett to comment: 'the richer the soil, and the more destitute of woods... the more miserable the labourers'. In other words, in this fertile corn country, without woodland for hunting and gathering, 'the big bullfrog' - large farmers - took an even greater share.[33] During the 'Swing' protests of 1830, Cobbett drew on the 'Garden County' to make a striking point about social deprivation against the backdrop of potential opulence. His account of burnings and violence in Benenden, for example, emphasised how this was 'one of the most delightful spots in this whole kingdom' but that the hated 'system' had made a 'hell of a paradise'.[34]

Frederick Liardet, investigating the 'rising' of Sir William Courtenay and his followers in the Blean in 1838, commented on the stark juxtaposition of 'peculiarly English' cultivated beauty and moral depravity: 'Gently rising hills, and picturesque vales...bearing the show of a minute and skilful husbandry ...interspersed with gardens, hop gardens, and orchards. What pity that the

[32] *MJKA*, 2/2/30.
[33] Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, vol.1, 321-2.
[34] *CPR*, 6/3/1830. See also 30/10/1830, 22/1/1831.

moral condition of the inhabitants of so fair of a spot stand...in such mournful contrast with its order and beauty'.[35] Liardet, thus, preserves the dignity of the 'garden of England' by distancing 'order and beauty' from the labour of these moral ciphers. To represent Kent as prosperous, beautiful and tamed, it was necessary to absorb, codify and sometimes to negate the social struggles that were persistently present.

iii. People and Landscape: The 'Kentish Yeomen'

Feudal imaginings of people and landscape, as typified by Barham and Gleig, were the perfect environment for that linchpin of 'romantic' and 'organic' conceptions of society, the 'yeomen'. 'Yeomen' were, of course, far from unique to Kent. Nevertheless, not unlike in some other English counties, notably Norfolk, the concept of the 'Kentish yeomen' was imbued with regionally specific meanings.[36] According to Edward Hasted's influential account, the term 'yeomanry' in Kent was a form of self-appellation used by men of much greater property than small owner occupiers, and '... here, likewise, comprehends the principal farmers and landholders', a wide definition that encompassed the many landholding men who did not work their own territories.[37] Although this did not negate ongoing concerns about the 'plight' of the smallholding 'yeomen',

[35] F. Liardet, *Riot in Kent. Report made to the Central Society of Education on the state of the Peasantry at Boughton, Herne-Hill, and the Ville of Dunkirk, near Canterbury* (London: 1838), 10-11.
[36] Numerous pamphlets and journals were aimed at the 'Norfolk Yeoman'. For example, *The Norfolk Yeoman's Gazette and Eastern Advertiser* ran for thirteen issues in 1823.
[37] Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of The County of Kent* (Canterbury: W Bristow, 1797), vol. 1, 300.

depictions of Kent in this period also abounded with representations of them in a reassuringly wealthy and optimistic guise.

The 'Kentish yeomen', like the landscape, were symbolic of the heightened virtues of rural 'Englishness' that Kent apparently excelled in. As the well-known jingle illustrates, the prosperous 'yeoman' was a symbol of the fertility and affluence of the region compared to other areas of Britain:

A Knight of Cales,
A Gentleman of Wales,
And a Laird of the North Countree:
A Yeoman of Kent,
With his yearly rent,
Will buy them out all three!

This particular poem predates the period, but was quoted by Barham and Scott.[38]

The 'Kentish yeoman' was stout, sturdy, and a generous entertainer, fond of food and wine, and possessed, if not of luxury and opulence, of the comforts of life. In the *Ingoldsby Legends* readers met 'yeoman' Thomas Marsh, of Marston Hall near Folkestone. He was a full six-foot in height, and in the prime of life. He is first encountered at the head of his 'well-furnished board' adorned with a 'cold sirloin...big enough to frighten a Frenchman', and 'ale strong enough to blow a man's beaver off', indicative of the English 'yeoman's' superior powers

[38] Barham, *Ingoldsby Legends*, 370. Reworkings of this poem can be found in Scott, *Ivanhoe*, 457; *Kentish Gazette*, 17/10/1828.

in the consumption of vitals and alcohol.[39] Yeoman Marsh's abundant hospitality was matched by his literary contemporary, Mr Wardle, from *The Pickwick Papers*. Mr Wardle, was the 'yeoman' of Manor Farm, Dingley Dell, of which it was said 'There an't a better spot o' ground in all Kent'.[40] A generous and convivial entertainer, he supported a very comfortable lifestyle and a dependent entourage of immediate family, 'poor relations', and employees, who were well fed enough to include the infamous 'fat boy'. His 'best sitting room', was lit up by a 'crackling fire' and 'light-hearted laughter'. According to Dickens, it was just the place where, 'old English yeomen... would have held their revels' had they 'turned into fairies when they died'.

Depictions of 'Kentish yeomen' evoked links between the past and the present and the unchanging nature of their 'Englishness'. To Geoffrey Oldcastle, writer of *The Canterbury Magazine* in 1835, the 'race' of the 'Kentish yeomen', had emerged cultivating their fields at the dawn of antiquity. They had 'defied the foreign foeman' including the Romans and the Normans, and now, in the steps of their forefathers, and in an echo of Cobbett, resisted 'Scotch philosophers and Jews'. This 'plain', 'proud' and 'manly Kentish yeomen', like Marsh and Wardle, acted as the linchpin of a patriarchal community, keeping all those around him 'safe and warm'.[41]

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[39] Barham, *Ingoldsby Legends*, 371.
[40] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers,* 71.
[41] Geoffrey Oldcastle, *The Canterbury Magazine*, vol.2, Jan. 1835. Oldcastle was also the editor in the 1830s of the *Kentish Observer* and the *Canterbury Journal and Farmers Gazette.*

Although often portrayed in a whimsical light, the 'Kentish yeomen' did not automatically resemble the negative rural stereotypes, which were produced by predominantly urban commentators in this period.[42] Within the ideologies of 'Old England', the qualities of the 'yeomen' could equally be celebrated as reasons for the countryman's power and influence rather than as quaint clichés from the bywaters of history. The 'Kentish yeoman' was symbolic of many 'serious' qualities of 'Old English' manliness: of plain-dealing, of strength – his much lauded 'sturdiness' and 'stoutness', - of the status of land ownership, and of the ability to work it. His consequent prosperity and independence allowed him to bind together the organic and familial bonds of society. Journalist William Woodbine, referring in general to the English 'yeoman', showed he was well aware of the images produced by detractors and, in response, staked 'yeoman' virtues, and the work of the land, against the indolent habits of town-dwellers:

> Whatever the idle and vain may think of you – yowkals...chow bacons, chopsticks[43], or country bumpkin...however they may ascribe your plain dealing to rudeness, your rural pursuits to want of taste...and intellect... your calling is the most honourable, the most conducive to the blessings of health and confidence, and the one best calculated to produce independence of mind, benevolence of heart, and purity of morals.[44]

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[42] Recent adherents of new rural history such as Barry Reay have railed against urban stereotypes of country people in the nineteenth century, summed up in the character of 'Hodge', the stereotypical farm labourer, in the 1880 novel by Richard Jeffries, *Hodge and his Masters*, Reay, *Rural Englands,* 3-8. The political prints that poked fun at country bumpkins, from an urban perspective, are far too many to list. Examples which highlight their 'comical' ignorance include William Heath, 'The Dismay of Ambiguity Defeated', in which a townsman outwits a simple countryman, 1830 (BL catalogue reference: 16124).

[43] William Cobbett used the term chopsticks to apply to agricultural labourers. He certainly did not use it with negative connotations, as he championed their character and values. This usage indicates either a disparity of opinion between Cobbett and Woodbine - which, on certain matters there certainly was - or that the term was used as a derogatory label by others, Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*, 3-5.

[44] *The British Yeoman, and Rural Gazette*, 7/1/1832.

Independence and morality were, of course, classic components of masculinity in early nineteenth-century middle-class 'domestic ideology': Woodbine believed countrymen to be the *more* moral and independent, and indeed domestic.[45] Nevertheless, his was also a defence of attributes that did not fit so neatly into the ideals of middle-class urbanites. Large appetites, even large waistlines, were attributes of which such 'Englishmen' as Woodbine and Oldcastle were certainly not ashamed. Like John Bull, a far more accessible symbol of 'Englishness' in this period because of his prevalent visual representation in political caricatures, the 'yeoman's' purported paunchiness could be used to denigrate him.[46] Nevertheless, his 'stoutness' could equally be a symbol of affluence and prosperity and the source of national or regional pride - an indicator of the kind of man who formed the backbone of 'Old England'. Indeed, the appellation 'yeoman', was popular in Kent with men of all levels of society, from town-dwelling tradesmen, to the aristocratic owners of vast estates.[47] Being a 'yeoman of Kent' certainly had resonance among the humbler members of the 'landed interest'. Robert Stapely, a farmer of Tunbridge Wells,

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[45] For domestic ideology, see Hall and Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, part 1.

[46] Jeannine Surrel, 'John Bull', in Raphael Samuel ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British Identity*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 1989), 8. For a discussion of John Bull, see also Miles Taylor, 'John Bull and the Iconography of public Opinion in England, 1712 to circa 1929', *Past and Present*, vol. 134 (1992), 93-128. Both Surrel and Taylor emphasise the flexibility of the rhetoric of John Bull in embodying the British 'everyman', and his utilisation by 'Tories', 'Whigs' and 'Radicals'. Taylor insists that John Bull functioned predominantly as a critique of the effect of varying fiscal policies upon the beleaguered taxpayer - an issue most pressing in the years before the 1832 Reform Bill - rather than as an embodiment of 'Britishness', who illustrated changing notions of patriotism, as argued by Surrel. Surrel, particularly, emphasises the dominance of *urban* John Bulls and suggests that even when he was embodied as a yeoman farmer 'he seems more closely related to the village rustic as the townsmen imagines him than to the real English agricultural worker', Surrel, 'John Bull', 23.

[47] See for example, *MJKA*, 23/9/28.

who held his lands by copyhold and leasehold, declared, in his will of 1836, that he was proud to be a 'stout yeoman' of a 'county of stout yeomen'.[48]

3. 'Vanguard of Liberty'

i. Fortress Kent

The second significant factor that defined a sense a place in Kent was its fortress-like location, and the signs of its historical defensive role, which had been renewed recently in the Napoleonic conflicts. These, arguably, were the more uniquely 'Kentish' facet of the county, than the garden-style agriculture that was also emphasised in representations of the county. Recent Napoleonic fortifications, barracks, Martello Towers and that 'godforsaken ditch' the Royal Military canal, were all lamented by Cobbett in his *Rural Rides*.[49] In literature, Dickens' descriptions of Rochester and Canterbury and other Kentish towns tell how the military overshadowed the built environment - particularly the ancient castles - while military men dominated social life. Rochester Castle, in particular, attracted lavish praise for the striking aspect that it presented to those approaching the town up the Medway Valley, or over the bridge. Mr Pickwick's sentiment – 'what a study for an antiquarian!' - was echoed by many.[50]

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[48] Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, Robert Stapley, Yeomen of Tunbridge Wells, 10/3/1829, PROB 11/1753.

[49] See descriptions of New Romney, Hythe, Dover, Sandwich, Deal and Canterbury. William Cobbett, *Rural Rides,* vol. 1, 303-316.

[50] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 11; *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 112; Thomas Fisher, *The Kentish Traveller's Companion: in a Descriptive View of the Towns, Remarkable Buildings, and Antiquities* (Rochester & Chatham, 1794), 145-9.

Such a striking symbol of times past could provoke reflection on present political dilemmas. John Gale Jones, founder of the London Corresponding Society, visited the Medway towns on a political tour in 1796. Rochester Castle evoked imaginings of the high gothic and the lost chivalric. While the 'mouldering fragments, solitary turrets' and the 'incessant screams' of the ravens, haunted visitors, he also recalled 'the glorious deeds of ancient heroes, and the records of former ages', and the possibility of a once 'mighty and flourishing empire' crumbling to dust.[51] For Fussell, the writer of an 1818 guide to the coast of Kent, the declining state of the castles in Rochester and Canterbury, as well as the 'unhealthy' aspects of the barracks, particularly those at Saltwood, provoked fears about the health and morality of soldiers, those entrusted with the defence of the nation.[52] Yet many more saw Kent's fortified landscape as monuments to her glorious and unconquered past and the triumph of her people's heroic endeavours: 'The Voice of Britain', printed in the *Kentish Gazette* in 1798, called upon all Britons to rally around the 'White cliffs... to fight for old England, our laws and our King'.[53]

ii. 'Men of Kent' and 'Foundation Myths'

The most famous rendition of the patriotic symbolism of the white cliffs of Dover came from the pen of William Wordsworth, in 1803. At this time of

[51] John Gale Jones, *A Political Tour through Rochester, Chatham, Maidstone and Gravesend etc.*, 1796 (Rochester: Baggin's Book Bazaar, 1997), 11. For background on Jones, see E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 162.
[52] Fussell, *The Journey around the Coast of Kent,* 49, 79, 193, 210.
[53] 'The voice of Britain: A Song to the Tune of Hearts of Oak', originally printed in *KG,* 19/6/1798, in De Vaynes, ed., *A Kentish Garland,* vol.1; See also *Times*, 17/10/1798; Maidstone volunteers, *KG*, 14/10/1828.

invasion scare, the Cumbrian born poet drew upon Kent's fortress-like landscape, and also the hardy characteristics of her people – the 'Men of Kent', - to pen a rousing piece of propaganda.

Sonnet to the Men of Kent
William Wordsworth, October 1803

Vanguard of Liberty, ye Men of Kent,
Ye children of a soil that doth advance
Her haughty brow against the coast of France,
Now is the time to prove your hardiment!
To France the words of invitation sent!
They from their fields can see the countenance
Of your fierce war, may see the glittering lance,
And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.
Left single, in bold parley, ye of yore,
Did from the Normans win a gallant wreath;
Confirmed the charters that were yours before, -
No parleying Now! In Britain is one breath;
We all are with you now from shore to shore:-
Ye Men of Kent, 'tis Victory or death.[54]

Wordsworth's famous verse illustrated the wide symbolic resonance of the 'Men of Kent', even to people from outside the county, and made explicit many of their defining qualities, including their links to the land: these were 'children of the soil'. Above all, however, these few lines invoked the 'Men of Kent's' proven record as defenders of the nation. Britain then stood, with 'one breath', behind the 'bold' men who resisted the Norman Conqueror, and who were required to repeat their endeavours against the Napoleonic foe. Wordsworth, of course, alluded to the well-known legends of the 'Men of Kent' and their

[54] William Wordsworth, *Sonnet to the 'Men of Kent'*, October 1803.

repelling of William's invading army in 1066, stories which provided the people of Kent and their chroniclers with powerful 'foundation myths', which connected people with place, and that mobilised a sense of collective identity.

In the early nineteenth century, the 'foundation myth' of the 'Men of Kent' usually unfolded like this: at the Battle of Hastings, the 'Men of Kent' had been at the vanguard of Harold's unfortunately defeated army. When William then marched through Kent, he was greeted by the 'natives', disguised with the boughs of their sturdy, home-grown oaks. Suddenly emerging, they ambushed the usurper. In recognition of their valour, William granted that the 'Men of Kent' or, depending on the version of the legend, the 'Kentish Men', could keep their ancient rights, including the practice of gavelkind, and their position at the vanguard of the army. It was often suggested that this event took place at Swanscombe, near Dartford in West Kent.[55]

This story, on which there were numerous variations, had precedents that reached back until at least the sixteenth century, when it was alluded to by William Lambarde in his *Perambulation of Kent* (1570), and in *Camden's Britannia* (1580).[56] The 'Swanscombe legend', regarding the oaken boughs, was treated by many as 'entirely fabulous' although the contention that the 'Men of

[55] The historical validity of Kent's resistance has been much challenged. William's brother, Odo, became first Earl of Kent and was responsible for much of the despoilment of the land, D. Bates, 'The land pleas of William I's reign: Penenden Heath revisited', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,* vol. 51 (1978), 1–19.

[56] William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent, 1570* (Chatham: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1826), 7; William Camden, *Camden's Britannia,* 1580, Gough Edition, 1789, ed., Gordon J. Copley (London: Hutchinson, 1977), 7.

Kent' retained unique 'immunities' after the conquest was taken far more seriously, and scrutinised by historians and lawyers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[57] Hasted, ever reliant on sources, makes no allusion to the 'oaken boughs' incident, merely narrating that the 'Men of Kent' were at the forefront of the Battle of Hastings, and that gavelkind and their right of 'being placed at the vanguard of the army' was conceded to them.[58] Blackstone, in his *Commentaries*, mentioned that 'ancient rights' were allotted to the 'Men of Kent' by William the Conqueror under circumstances that were, so he claimed, 'universally known'.[59] The origins and practices of gavelkind were also much open to debate, as was the thirteenth-century *Consuetudines Kancie*. This complex document, which laid down the peculiarities and privileges of Kentish law, was discussed by Lambarde and, in the eighteenth century, by Thomas Robinson.[60] A particular revival of interest in Kentish law was spawned in 1836, triggered by the systematic mapping of landownership required by the Tithe Communication Act, which stimulated interest in the press.[61] Gavelkind was

[57] Thomas Fisher, *The Kentish Traveller's Companion,* 70. William Somner, in *A Treatise on Gavelkind*, 1660, disputes the authenticity of the ' Swanscombe legend', as is discussed by De Vaynes, in *The Kentish Garland,* 1.

[58] Hasted, *History of Kent* (Canterbury: W. Bristow, 1797), vol. 1, 67, 317. See also, Ireland, *History of Kent,* vol. 4, 756-9.

[59] Blackstone describes the form of 'socage tenure' in Kent, and that it was conceded to the people by William the Conqueror, as information 'universally known', 'Of the modern English Tenures' in William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 1765-1769 (Oxford, Clarendon, 1993), book 2, column 6.

[60] Thomas Robinson, *The Common Law of Kent; or, the Customs of Gavelkind. With an Appendix concerning Borough-English* (London: 1744); F.Hull, 'John de Berwyke and the Consuetudines Kancie', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 96 (1980), 1,7.

[61] Kent Law Society, *An Address to the Freeholders of the County of Kent on the Subject of Gavelkind* (Maidstone: J.V.Hall, 1836); *MGKC*, 5/7/1836; *MJKA*, 12/7/1836.

subsequently discussed at length by early Victorian antiquarians and chroniclers, including the founders of the Kent Archaeological Society.[62]

iii. East and West

Perhaps the most persistent subject of debate about Kentish 'foundation myths', was that of the division between 'Kentish Men' and 'Men of Kent'. Usually, it was considered that those who hail from east of the Medway are 'Men of Kent' and those who hail from the west are 'Kentish Men'.

In the early nineteenth century there was a sense of superiority of the 'Men of Kent' over the 'Kentish Men', as the former were allegedly those who retained their unique rights and privileges through various conquests. However, this distinction founders if one believes the 'oaken bough' incident took place in Swanscombe, which is to the west of the Medway! Such divisions were far from clear-cut, even by those deeply proud of their county 'heritage', and, like discussions of the 'yeomen', signified a preoccupation with racial and ethnic origins, particularly a regionally inflected Anglo-Saxonism.[63] According to Robert Cowton, born in Canterbury in 1817, he was a 'Man of Kent':

'Canterbury in ancient times was the capital of the 'Men of Kent'. The terms 'Kentish Men' and 'Men of Kent' distinguished between newcomers in the west, and the more 'emphatically denominated', and 'genuine' 'Men of Kent' in the

[62] Charles Sandys, *Consuetudines Kanciae, A History of Gavelkind and other Remarkable Customs in the County of Kent* (London: 1851); *Archaeologia Cantiana,* vol. 1 (1857), 113-154.
[63] For 'yeomen', see Melman, 'Claiming the nation's past'.

east.[64] Conversely, according to John Mockett, also an East Kent resident: 'the distinction between the Men of Kent and Kentish Men, arose in consequence of the battle between Saxons and Danes with King Alfred....Alfred recovered East Kent and than secured the coast. Thus Rochester and West Kent became Men of Kent; and East Kent including Thanet are Kentish Men'.[65]

This, then, was far from a settled matter, although Mockett's assertion that it was the 'Kentish Men' who were in the east was a rare one. Moreover, the most predominately used title, both in the east and the west, was 'Men of Kent'. On occasions, newspapers or speakers addressing a county audience would open their spiel 'Men of Kent and Kentish Men' (never the other way round). More often, the catchall phrase 'Men of Kent' sufficed.[66]

Beyond convenience, the most significant reason for this was probably the predominance in power and economic clout of the affluent east of the county. The major hubs of the 'county community's' power, Maidstone and Canterbury were in the east, although Maidstone stood upon the Medway itself. The county meeting ground of Penenden Heath was in the east. All the major county newspapers were also based there. Of course, the prosperous areas of the London encroachment and Tunbridge Wells were in the west, but imaginings of this part of the county were largely associated with the less fertile soils and poorer settlements of the Weald.

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[64] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 8-9.
[65] Mockett, *Mockett's Journal*, 3.
[66] *MGKC*, 5/10/30, 9/11/30; *KG*, 28/10/30.

The Weald had not always been a marginal area of the county. Indeed, its once influential cloth industry left a lasting legacy in the 'Kentish Greycoats', a term which originally referred to the families who controlled the industry. These included the Bathursts, Courthorpes and Austens, who were so called because of their 'dour' self-manufactured dress, and the show of numbers and unity that they displayed at elections.[67] 'Kentish Grey' was considered the 'county livery', was worn by agents at county elections, and was the uniform colour of the West Kent Regiments of volunteer and official forces.[68] Despite this legacy, the almost total annihilation of the Kentish cloth trade by the late eighteenth century, meant that the phrase 'Kentish Greycoats' was less well used in the period. One ballad from 1782, however, puts the 'Greycoats' on a par with the three other definitional terms of 'Kentish' identity: 'Greycoats, Kentish Men, Men of Kent and Yeoman', were all 'lovers of freedom, of wine and of women', who repelled 'William the Norman', drank to 'our soldiers and seamen' and boasted 'legions of freemen'.[69] The 'Greycoats of Kent' also re-emerged, in the guise of the ' Protestant Greycoats', on Penenden Heath in 1828.[70] Nevertheless, the supremacy of East over West was observed by one of the 'Greycoats'' descendants, Jane Austen, who remarked in 1813: 'Our gentlemen are all gone to their Sittingbourne meeting, East and West Kent in one Barouche together –

[67] Deirdre le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, 1.
[68] David Jennings, *Hawkhurst. A Sketch of its History and Antiquities upon the Plan Suggested in the Gentleman's Magazine for the Procuring of Parochial Histories throughout England* (London: J. Nicholls, 1792), 4.
[69] 'Kentish Glee', originally printed in *KG*, 16/18/1782, quoted in *The Kentish Garland*, 244.
[70] *MGKC*, 21/10/1828.

rather - West Kent driving East Kent. - I believe that is not the usual way of the county'.[71]

The division between East, West and Weald certainly had meaning to electors who, in the years prior to 1832, tended to elect the two county members as one from the West and one from the East. This division was also adhered to in the Reform Act of 1832, when the representation of the county of Kent doubled: two MPs were returned for the East, and two for the West. A disruption of this neat split produced one of the few moments in which real tensions between the East and West became manifest. In the last election before the Reform Act, two 'Reform' politicians, Thomas Rider and Thomas Law Hodges, both from the Weald, were returned. The Tory and eastern *Kent Gazette,* led the objections, indignantly commenting that '...there are some spirits in East Kent who will not suffer this part of the country to be reduced to complete insignificance'.[72] Others expressed utter disbelief at this reversal of the 'natural' order, objecting more to the MPs' Wealden than their western origins. In an open letter from a 'Kentish Freeholder' to Hodges, a correspondent lamented: '...had an Angel from heaven at that time (before the election) told that honourable gentleman himself (Mr Rider), that he would become a candidate, he would have exclaimed, 'What! Will East Kent and West Kent, whose motto is 'Invicta' submit to the return of two *Weald of Kent Knights of the Shire!!!* No, - no, - no. It is impossible, utterly

[71] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 26/10/1813, Le Faye, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters*, 244.
[72] *KG,* 29/4/1829.

impossible''.[73] Such objections illustrated just how integral the 'Men of Kent' had become in interpreting political conflict, and forms of belonging, by 1832.

iv. The 'Men of Kent', Identity and Politics

The legends of the 'Men of Kent', then, were not solely a subject for literature and antiquarians. While their presence in prior histories of the region rendered them something more than 'invented tradition', the 'Men of Kent' evolved over the tumultuous period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in dialogue with economic, cultural and political change.[74]

Conceptions of the 'Men of Kent' were dependent upon the kinds of public arenas, and the political causes, through which they were articulated. In the late eighteenth century the 'Men of Kent' were chiefly located in elite, masculine culture, notably in the boisterous songs and speeches of the gentry and aristocracy, who formed the core of the 'county community'. The 'Men of Kent' was a motif, if not a deeply felt identity, associated with a culture of sport and associations. These were, in turn, influenced by new fashions for medievalism, 'romanticism' and chivalry - to which the legends of the 'Men of Kent' lent themselves - and bound

[73] *KG*, 24/5/1831.

[74] For a discussion of how traditions with apparently perennial existences are invented in 'rapidly changing societies', see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 'Introduction: inventing traditions', in Hobsbawm and Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3-4. For an account of how localised discourses of 'Englishness' were dominant in the culture of the late nineteenth century, with special reference to celebrations of King Alfred in Wessex, see Paul Readman, 'The Place of the Past in English Culture, c.1890-1914', *Past and Present*, vol. 186 (2005).

together by a new enthusiasm among elites for the 'county' scene.[75] Far from embodying the image of the effete, aristocratic fop, criticised by the press and 'public opinion' of the mercantile elite, the associational life of late eighteenth-century Kent celebrated the rugged, boisterous and 'manly'.[76] Horse racing and prize-fighting and the newly instituted 'national pastime' of foxhunting were popular: avid huntsmen included Sir Edward Knatchbull, the eighth baronet (1758-1819).[77] Drinking songs and election broadsides told both of the thrill and 'huzza' of the hunt and of 'stouthearted Kentish men, valiant and bold'.[78]

Elite homosocial societies flourished in this period. Freemason lodges were set up in Margate, Canterbury and many other areas.[79] Their songs, too, told of the 'Men of Kent' and their triumph over the Conqueror.[80] More specifically 'Kentish', and self-consciously mediaeval and 'romantic', was the 'Kentish bowman' group, which assembled in Dartford, north-west Kent, from 1785 to 1802. With expensive subscription fees - and a fine of £100 on marrying - this was an elitist group, patronised by the Prince of Wales and several peers, including the Earl of Darnley. They indulged in lavish dinners, military style uniforms, archery contests and

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[75] Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 21-23; Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, 403.
[76] Wilson, *The Island Race*, 37. See also Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society in Britain 1660-1800*, 75-76; McCormack, *The Independent Man.*
[77] For the growth of foxhunting in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century into the 'national sport' of the 1830s, and the associated fashion and sporting press, see David C Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of English Foxhunting, 1753-1885* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), 9-13; Mason, *The English Gentleman*, 83; Knatchbull-Huggeson, *KentishFamily*, 145-149.
[78] J. De Vaynes, ed., *A Kentish Garland*, vol. 1, 334-345, see for example, 'County election, a ballad', *KC*, 6/4//1790, 13/4/1790, 342; see also 'Tally-ho is our man', to the tune of 'Hearts of Oak', *KG*, 22/6/1790, 245.
[79] E.D.Y.Grasby, *The Province of Kent 1770-1970* (Provincial Grand Lodge of Kent, 1970).
[80] Freemasonry songs, *Kentish Gazette*, 27/2/1795, 22/5/1795, in *Kentish Garland*, 338.

standards emblazoned with the Kent Invicta, the rearing white horse that was the emblem of the 'Men of Kent'.[81]

The rousing, and inherently loyal, symbolism of the 'Men of Kent', however, was to find a much wider public in propaganda stimulated by the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. For loyalists, the legends of the 'Men of Kent' evoked a melding of regional and national interest that took on powerful, narrative meanings.[82] Besides Wordsworth's mighty broadside, they featured in press and propaganda, both locally and nationally. The song 'The Man of Kent' was among the many loyalist patriotic songs reproduced as broadsides in the wartime period, proclaiming '*in chivalry and glory, the Kentish men are known. High fame'd in ancient story, and also in our own*'.[83] Local men were celebrated as eminent examples of 'Men of Kent', seen as continuing long traditions of martial prowess. The people of Thanet presented a sword, emblazoned with a Kent Invicta, to local naval hero Sir Thomas Staines in 1813. The ceremony prompted John Mockett, to reflect on what it meant to be a 'Man of Kent'. In his

[81] *Kentish Garland*, 380-381; J.W.Dodd, *Ballads of Archery, Sonnets, &c.* (London: R. H. Evans and W. Ginger, 1818).
[82] A collection of ballads associated with the Kentish Volunteers between 1793 and 1804, and which framed their mission during the Napoleonic wars in narratives of the 'Men of Kent' can be found in De Vaynes, ed., *A Kentish Garland.* vol.1, 351-379. Many of these were originally published in the *Kentish Gazette* or *Kentish Chronicle* in the 1790s. Another example of volunteers framing their actions in the legends of the 'Men of Kent' was the 1799 Grand Review at Moat Park, attended by George III when the Volunteers wore 'oaken boughs' in their hats, symbol of the 'Men of Kent's' resistance to the Normans, Harris, *A Century of Yeoman Service*, 15. See also 'The Song of the Westerham Troopers', 1803, in H. F.B. Wheeler & A.M. Broadley, *Napoleon and the Invasion of England. The Story of the Great Terror* (London: John Lane 1908), 299. For a discussion of how the Napoleonic wars 're-invoked' a 'host of precedents, myths and historical traditions' see Finucane, 'Manifestations of National Identity in Kent', 69-110, 249.
[83] *The Man of Kent* was printed as part of the vast amount of loyalist propaganda in 1803 (Picadilly: Hatchards, 1803).

Figure 3. W. Holland, 1803, 'The Men of Kent inviting Bonaparte to a banquet!!'
Bodlian Library, Curzon collection b.12(4).
Here, the stout and somewhat fearsome-looking 'Men of Kent,' armed with pikes, entice Napoleon with gunpowder soup!

journal he recorded that '...much joy was excited by...our friend and naval hero, which impressed on our minds the following lines... '*In war, and every virtuous way, A Man of Kent still bears that day*''.[84] Regional conceptions of nationhood and masculinity were thus evoked on an unprecedented scale, bolstering the loyalist cause, and given resonance by the scale of wartime activity in the county.[85]

Nevertheless, this emphatic sense of the 'county', and 'county' identity, did not automatically carry over into the politics of the post-war era. Indeed, in 1815, Kent arguably returned to the peripheries of the national 'scene'. No longer visibly repelling external invaders, the county was far from a hub of the creative impulses of 'radicalism', that challenged the foundations of national power from London, Manchester and elsewhere.[86] Despite small-scale 'radical' activity, notably in Maidstone and the London spread, and ongoing covert rural unrest, the landed elite's hold on power in Kent remained relatively stable during this post-war political strife.[87] Borough elections, particularly those with large numbers of enfranchised freemen, could be lively and the power of the municipal

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[84] John Mockett, *Mockett's Journal*, 67. The sword is now in the National Maritime Museum. For details: <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=WPN1252>. Another eminent military 'Man of Kent' celebrated during the wars and after, was General Wolffe, victor of Quebec. For a ballad dedicated to him see 'Men of Kent' (London: J. Pitts, c.1819). Bodleian Library, Harding Collection. B25 (1240).

[85] See Figure 3. W. Holland, 1803, 'The Men of Kent inviting Bonaparte to a banquet!!' Bodleian Library, Curzon b.12(4).

[86] James Chandler, *England in 1819*, 19; J.R.Wordie, 'Perceptions and Reality: The Effects of the Corn Laws and their Repeal in England, 1815-1906', in J.R.Wordie, ed., *Agriculture and Politics in England*, 37. For a general overview, see J. Belcham, *Popular Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1996).

[87] R. P. Hastings, 'Crime and Public Order', in Frederick Lansberry, ed., *Government and Politics in Kent, 1640-1914,* 238-240; R. Wells, 'Popular Protest and Social Crime: The evidence

corporations had been challenged since at least the mid-eighteenth century.[88] County elections, on the other hand, were relatively uncontested, or even debated, while various pieces of centralised legislation, such as the Sterne Bourne Act, placed provincial power more firmly than ever in the hands of 'propertied men'.[89] Rather than any challenge from 'the people', it was the government who represented the contending interests in the county. In the guise of the East India Company and the Royal Dockyards, they dominated elections in the smaller Kentish boroughs such as Hythe and New Romney.[90] The prevailing forces in the Kentish press - which did not in this period possess a strong 'regional' voice - were vociferous in their defence of the *ancient regime*: the *Kentish Gazette* blamed 'Peterloo' on mobs and the Irish, and considered 'Reform' an excuse for 'radicals' to overthrow 'Old England' and its laws.[91]

This reactionary hegemony had implications for forms of regional belonging. With little regional focus in projects through which identities were forged, notions of specifically *Kentish* 'Englishness' and masculinity, which had flourished during the war, were moribund. A short-lived pro-'Reform' journal published in Canterbury in 1818 to 1819 took the title 'The Man of Kent', but,

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of criminal gangs in rural southern England 1790-1860', *Southern History*, vol. 13 (1991), 32-81.

[88] Brian Atkinson, 'Conservative and Liberal: national politics in Kent from the late 1820s to 1914', Hume, Yates & Hastings eds., *Government and Politics in Kent*, 141; John A. Phillips, 'From Municipal Matters to Parliamentary Principles: Eighteenth-Century Borough Politics in Maidstone', *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 27, no. 41 (1988), 328-9.

[89] For an account of County electoral politics in Kent in the late eighteenth century, see Knatchbull-Huggeson, *Kentish Family*, 150-152; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, 17, 152; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, 46.

[90] J. Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 10.

[91] *KG*, 24/8/1819; *MGKC*, 18/1/1821.

empathising with the cause of the Manchester 'radicals' rather than any provincial or agricultural interest, drew only on the name and never exploited their 'foundation myths'.[92] Indeed, the 'Men of Kent' were notable for their relative absence, and by their lack of popular resonance. It took a moment of particular tension in county politics, for the question of what it meant to be 'Kentish' to rear its head. When the Tory High Sheriff opposed a request for a county meeting discussing 'Reform' in 1822, the Earl of Darnley, taking justified umbrage, declared that the 'Men of Kent - men more proverbially jealous of their rights than others...' should never 'submit to be dictated to by a despot!'[93] On other occasions, expressions of 'Kentish' identity were connected with loyalty to government, King and the status quo, and carried connotations of Tory loyalty.[94]

Yet the 'Men of Kent' were not to remain in the doldrums for long. Over the next ten years, the campaigns surrounding Catholic Emancipation were to inject a fertile passion into the cause of Church, King and Constitution, and 'Reform' was to bring a vibrant new life to county politics. The development of county-orientated meetings, societies and particularly the press, produced a strong, and more widely inclusive sense of 'county community'. Histories of the 'Men of Kent' were reconfigured once again to provide a landscape of knowledge and a 'narrative' structure that framed discussions of who was included or excluded from these new visions of the county, and related conceptions of region and

[92] *The Man of Kent, or Canterbury, Political and Weekly Miscellany,* 19/9/1818-25 12/1819.
[93] *The Times*, 19/1/1821 to 21/1/1821.
[94] *KG,* 22/3/1816, 21/12/1819.

nation. These narratives framed contemporary happenings, similarly to nineteenth-century narratives of the 'ancient constitution', and of 'the people'.[95] Unlike the legends of Robin Hood, and more 'radical' manifestations of the 'Norman yoke' theory, however, those of the 'Men of Kent' still predominantly advocated a hierarchical, and even imperialist status quo, indicative of the hegemonic powers that articulated them.[96]

v. 'Maids of Kent'

The prime female appellation connected with the county, was that of the 'Maids of Kent'. Unlike the 'yeomen', who worked the land, and the 'Men of Kent' who defended it, under the 'masculine gaze' of Kent's chroniclers, women, including the 'Maids of Kent', were predominantly represented as part of the landscape: a product, like the apples and hops; an object of beauty, with 'lips like cherries'.[97] Relatively absent from political discourse, they were regularly toasted by raucous revelers at political meetings at which no women were present or, rather

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[95] A similar argument about inclusion and exclusion is made with reference to the legends of King Arthur, concentrating mainly on evidence from the Victorian period and upon generic rather than regionally inflected nationalism, in Stephanie Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 4-9. For discussions on 'narrative' in nineteenth-century politics see Joyce, *Visions of the People*, 9-13; Vernon 'Introduction' in Vernon ed., *Re-reading the Constitution*, 12-15.

[96] For more details on narratives of the 'Norman yoke' see 'The Norman Yoke', in C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in the Interpretation of the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Mercury Books, 1968) and E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 94.

[97] 'Kentish Cherries', Anon, c.1850, quoted in *Invicta Magazine*, vol. 5 (1910); *Kentish Gazette*, 17/10/1828; Gleig depicted the daughters of Kent as 'the children of nature', beautiful, delicate and easily yielding to the hand of man. See for example, 'Rose of East Kent', in *The Country Curate*, 201, and 'The Overseer's Daughter', in *Chronicles of Waltham*, 203.

more civilly, as the rather less explicitly subservient sounding 'Ladies of Kent' at the religious meetings or military displays at which they were present.[98]

Likewise, the 'Maids of Kent' had no powerful 'foundation myths'. Two women from the pre-modern period became, probably posthumously, associated with the title. Between them, they were exemplary of two linchpins of male imaginings of female virtue and vice: beauty and hysteria. The first, Joan, Countess of Kent, wife of the Black Prince, was known as the Fair Maid of Kent (1328-1385). According to Ireland, her fame arose purely 'from her rare beauty'.[99] The more famous was Elizabeth Barton, a nun and visionary, who opposed the Reformation. Her political interventions were extraordinary for a woman of her day, and her sufferings, interpreted in a different light, could have rendered her a Kentish Joan of Arc.[100] Nevertheless, in the early nineteenth century, the ideological relationship between Kent and Protestantism, and the interlinking of irrationality, violence, Catholicism and femininity, meant that Barton was subject to a negative press. In the eyes of Richard Barham, her achievements were no more than 'fits' and 'supernatural pranks' which 'eventually procured for her head an unenvied elevation upon London Bridge'.[101] Sir Walter Scott was equally derogatory, noting that the 'esteemed

[98] See for example, *MJKA,* 17/6/1831, 7/8/1831, 14/8/32.
[99] Ireland, *History of Kent*, vol. 1, 86. In the late eighteenth century, Joan was also the subject of a novel, play and an opera, Douglas James, *The Maid of Kent* (London, 1790); Francis Godolphin Waldren, *The Fair Maid of Kent. A play in five acts and in prose* (London, 1778); W. Pearce, *Windsor Castle [or the Fair Maid of Kent], an Opera, as perform'd at Covent Garden ... in honor of the Nuptials of... the Prince & Princess of Wales etc* (London: 1796).
[100] Diane Watt, 'Elizabeth Barton (*c.*1506–1534)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1598>
[101] Barham, *The Ingoldsby Legends,* 'The Leech of Folkestone', 376.

prophetess', was put to death as a cheat and 'confessed her fraud upon the scaffold', although he also noted that even 'Sir Thomas More was disposed to be a believer'.[102]

The 'Maids of Kent' thus provided no Kentish Marianne or Britannia, but then female assertion, however symbolic, sat uneasily with Kent's dominant identities. County belonging and regional conceptions of nationhood were about the ability to defend and work the land, characteristics that, given renewed meanings by recent events, gave both the region, and its men, a specific identity. Despite their multitudinous labours in rural and urban life, and their supporting role in the 'county community', women, in representations at least, were never the defenders and workers of the Kentish land.

4. Conclusion

Representations of Kent and its people signified much more than a common backdrop of knowledge about the economy and location of the county. The dominant and complex images of 'Garden of England' and 'Vanguard of liberty', of 'yeomen' and 'Men of Kent', illustrated how identities of people and places were constantly negotiated in dialogue with cultural, economic and social change. In early nineteenth-century Kent, important factors included ongoing

[102] Sir Walter Scott, *Letters On Demonology and Witchcraft,* 1829 (London: Routledge, 1898), 184; Sir Walter Scott, *The Abbot,* 1820 (London: Dutton, 1929), 119. Ireland called Elizabeth Barton 'the great impostor of her time'. Ireland, *History of Kent,* vol. 1, 142.

unrest in the countryside, the seismic effects of war in the region and the consequent 'peace'.

The prevailing image of Kent's landscape may have been the 'Garden of England', but this phrase belied much complexity. It was understandable, in a time of such change, that the elite would wish to construct the landscape as feminine and controlled - under the hand of man. The interweaving of past and present, the emphasis on feudalism and medievalism, also signified the 'perennialist', 'romantic' and 'paternalistic' values of the agricultural elite. Visitors and ex-residents, such as Dickens, identified the apparent abundance of its produce and the gentle, undulating landscape as an idyllic contrast to nearby London. Yet, in a climate of change and insecurity, this could not always be sustained.

Hegemonic gender notions - concerning man's dominant relationship with the land as controllers, defenders and producers, and women's subservient role as its beautiful, malleable produce - informed representations of the region. Similarly, the folklore-like figures of the 'Men of Kent' and 'yeomen', were vehicles for strong assertions of stridently masculine identities. The warlike figure of the 'Men of Kent' became of particular significance in wartime propaganda, symbolic of regionally specific tropes of martial masculinity; the 'yeoman' was associated with the peculiar opulence and prosperity of the region. However, rather than fading into insignificance in the post-war period, when Kent's

borders were no longer under siege and its agricultural economy was far from stable, these stridently 'manly' figures emerged as symbolic of the virtues of 'Englishness' and citizenship amidst debates about inclusion and exclusion from the nation in the 1820s. They also became of rhetorical importance in a changing 'public sphere' in which the 'county' was of increased significance. The next chapter will thus turn away from representations of people and place, to focus upon the 'county community', the ways in which forms of belonging to the county were evoked, and upon the men and women who participated in it.

Chapter Four: Men, Women and the Kent 'County Community'

1. Introduction

This chapter explores the ways that the Kent 'county community' was evoked through the political and social culture of the middling classes, gentry and aristocracy. The formal processes of governing a county drew the upper echelons together. However, the sense of the 'county community', and ideas about who were included or excluded from it, were bolstered by more culturally dictated gatherings, centred upon political societies, large-scale county meetings and elections, dinners, drinking spots, agricultural associations, religious associations, and military organisations, including the voluntary Yeomanry Cavalry. Of particular significance was the newspaper press, upon the pages of which the feelings and character of the 'county' were increasingly represented.

The 'county community', as defined in this chapter, varies from 'county society', in that it is an 'imagined community', with flexible boundaries. 'County society', as discussed by historians such as F.M.L. Thompson and Paul Langford, was the social network of elite families who oversaw the formal administrative and judicial governance of the county, and who also came together through circuits of country house visits, balls and social activities such as hunting. This circle had much less permeable boundaries: land ownership was a strict prerequisite, and it took around three generations for a new family to establish themselves as part of it.[1] There were obviously overlaps between the 'county community' and 'county society', and members of 'county society' held

[1] FML Thompson, *English Landed Society Nineteenth Century*, 112, 127-9; Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, see especially ch. 6.

the highest positions of power and prestige in both. Here, though, I am interrogating who was seen as belonging to the 'county' in this wider sense of the 'county community', and in which historically specific circumstances it came to be imagined as encompassing a broader spectrum of society than this narrow elite.

The argument of this chapter, then, which will be developed further in the next, is that representations of the 'county community' indicate a hegemonic shift in the make-up of the dominant Kentish 'public sphere' over the period.[2] This evolved from being relatively narrow – only the landed, aristocratic elite were able to speak for the 'county' – to encompass a far wider, but still strictly hierarchical, conception of the 'county community'. While historians have argued that regionalism in provincial politics was increasingly superseded by national interests in this period, this analysis of the Kent 'county community', then, questions how local and national issues were articulated through the framework of the county, as a unit to which belonging was felt and experienced.[3]

Nevertheless, the 'county' had limitations. Farmers' groups and evangelical societies, for example, while they brought the 'county community' together and could be increasingly inclusive, did not always evoke the 'county' - they could speak for a town, a nationwide organisation, or the 'landed interest'. The 'county', therefore, while prominent in this period, always vied with other

[2] For an account of growth of the Canterbury 'public sphere' in relation to the threatre, see Jean N. Baker, 'Theatre, Law and Society in the Provinces: The Case of Sarah Baker', in *Cultural and Social History,* 2004, 1, 159–178.
[3] Eastwood, *Governing Rural England,* 261-2.

forms of belonging. These social imaginings were also highly contested. Although poorer people were sometimes included in conceptions of the 'county community', plebeian associational culture could be an area in which competing notions of 'public opinion', antagonistic to those of the 'county community' were expressed. While women played a prominent role in 'county society', representations of the 'county community' and the performance of political culture, in newspapers and political speeches, conjured up images of a predominantly homosocial world. However, changes were also discernible in the position of middling and upper-class women during this period. The increasing number of religious meetings gave middle and upper-class women a new forum in the life of the 'county community', alongside the philanthropy, parties, balls and house visits that gave such an important role to the women of 'county society'.[4]

Finally, this chapter also explores the kinds of places in which the 'county community' came together and questions how these shaped shifting perceptions of the 'county'. Throughout the period, the predominance of political meetings in the county's many drinking places, from plebian alehouses to respectable Inns, for example, limited the inclusion of women and, on occasions, articulated the voice of the 'county' through a boisterous drinking culture. The increase in large, outdoor meetings in the latter part of the period, however, gave opportunities for the 'county' to be imagined in much larger-scale, inclusive, yet still strictly hierarchical, guises.

[4] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, ch. 2.

2. The Kent 'County Community'

i. 'Ancient' Families and the 'Knights of the Shire'

Amongst the most powerful figures in the 'county community' were the 'ancient' families of Kent, from amongst whom were elected the County Members of Parliament, the 'Knights of the Shire'[5]. The core group of Kentish family names, still celebrated in this period, consisted of about thirty families, including Knatchbull, Dering, Finch, Filmer, Brydges, Geary, Honeywood, Oxenden and Twisden. The heads of most of the families in this grouping were possessed of the relatively modest title of baronet.[6] These established landholders were deemed particularly suitable to represent the county in Parliament.[7] These prerequisites extended to 'Independent', 'Reforming' and Whig representatives such as William Honeywood, Thomas Law Hodges and Thomas Rider. Knatchbull married twice, both times within the 'county community', firstly to Annabella Honeywood and secondly to Fanny Knight. Fanny's father's name was originally Austen, of the Wealden Austen family.[8]

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[5] This was a term used to refer MPs in many counties, and did not imply possession of a formal title.

[6] Everitt, *The Community of Kent in the Great Rebellion*, 35-36; W. Berry, *Pedigree of the Families of the County of Kent* (London: 1830); J. Simpson, *Eminent Men of Kent* (London: Elliott Stock, 1893), 128-137, 164-5. Although some, like the Finch-Hatton's, had become vast landowners, many of this grouping, including the Dering's and the Filmer's, lived off relatively modest estates of under 10,000 acres, CKS U120 E, CKS U350 E. For a family which stayed mainly rooted in Kent, and whose power and wealth passed by marriage to Thomas Law Hodges, see John Ruskill Twisden, *The Family of Twysden or Twisden* (London: Tanner and Frome, 1939); For Richard Barham's decription of the elite of the county, an 'elegant' tribe, including the Honeywoods, Oxenden's, Robinsons, Faggs, Finch-Hattons, Tokes, Derings, Deedses and Fairfax's, see *Ingoldsby Legends,* 'The Wedding Day; or the Buccaneers Curse: a Family Legend', 258.

[7] Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 12. For a discussion of the 'kinds' of men suitable to stand for a borough seat in Kent, which also favoured men of 'ancient' names, like Dering and Geary, see the Duke of Wellington to G.R. Gleig, 10/9/1832 to 14/9/1832, USSS WP4 2/222/99-103.

[8] Knatchbull-Huggeson, *Kentish Family*, 165.

Sir Edward Knatchbull, ninth baronet (1781–1849), was one of the most lauded 'Knights of the Shire' of the post-war period. He exercised power at the levels of the national, regional, parochial and familial. A long serving M.P. for Kent, he was one of the two county Members between 1819 and 1831 under the unreformed electoral system, and then represented the new county constituency of East Kent between 1832 and 1845. He served as a member of Peel's Cabinet, as Paymaster General, in 1834 and again in 1841.[9]

Taking on roles such as county MPs, Lord Lieutenants, Sheriffs and JPs meant that the men of the landed gentry exercised power on a county as well as parochial and national level, and that county duties could be an important part of their lives.[10] Knatchbull took on several such duties. He was both a magistrate and an officer in the East Kent Yeomanry Cavalry, first commissioned as Captain in his father's troop, at the height of the invasion scare of 1803.[11]

As has often been observed, political allegiances in this period did not always fall into the neat categories of Whig and Tory, which were deeply fractured, both at national and provincial levels.[12] Knatchbull consistently represented the Tory party, although adopting Ultra-Tory beliefs led him to vote against Wellington's government on various issues, notably Catholic Emancipation. Although his personal beliefs were complex, he displayed a lifelong distaste for

[9] Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Kentish Family*, 220, 231-7.
[10] Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman,* 403.
[11] Commission of Edward Knatchbull Esq, 1803, CKS U274 014.
[12] For a recent discussions of the complexities of political ideology in this period, see Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People,* 309-328.

any sort of change to the constitution of church and state, and championed agricultural 'protection'.[13]

In his 'private' life, he headed a large extended family, and fathered at least ten children. He kept several households: his main seat was at Mersham le Hatch, near Ashford, surrounded by some of his extensive lands. He kept a London residence, and possessed a further hoestateuse and estate at Provender, also Kent, the legacy of the Hugessens, his mother's family. His wealth was primarily in the land, all of which was in Kent. In total, the Knatchbulls owned approximately 4,600 acres, which was scattered in twenty different parishes.[14]His relations had represented Kent at various times since the seventeenth century, and he virtually 'inherited' his seat on the death of his father, the eighth baronet, in 1819.[15]

Thomas Law Hodges was the second most influential county MP of the period. A major landowner, he possessed much of the parish of Benenden on the West Kent Weald, and estates elsewhere in the county.[16] His mother, Dorothy, came from a Nottinghamshire landed family, the Cartwrights. His father, Thomas Hallet Hodges, purchased their seat, Hemsted Place, in 1780. T.H.Hodges'

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[13] H. C. G. Matthew, 'Sir Edward Knatchbull, Ninth Baronet (1781–1849)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15702>; Knatchbull- Hugesson, *Kentish Family*, 167-171.

[14] For the main Knatchbull estate in Mersham, see Mersham Tithe Award Schedule, c.1837, <http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Maps/MER/02.htm>; Lansbery, 'The Government of the County', in Yates, Hume and Hastings eds., *Religion and Society in Kent*, 60.

[15] Knatchbull- Hugesson, *Kentish Family; MJKA*, 23/11/1829.

[16] In 1836, Hodges owned lands in Beneden, with a tythable value of £2729.1.3. His son, Thomas Twisden Hodges, also owned a large estate of his own in Benenden, valued at £79.3.13, which he leased to a tenant, see Benenden Tithe Award Schedule, c. 1837, <http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Maps/BEN/01.htm>

father, in turn, had been a governor of Bombay, although the family had previously been possessors of modest lands in Dorset.[17] While the name Hodges was not as lauded in county annals as that of Knatchbull, he allied himself in marriage to Rebecca Twisden, heiress to the fortunes of another of Kent's 'ancient names'. He also served as a Captain in the West Kent Militia.[18] As Andrews concluded, then: 'without exception, the men who represented Kent during this period...were gentlemen, their wealth was from the land, and they were prominent in county affairs as justices of the peace and officers and the Militia'.[19] Although the boroughs had more varied candidates, the names who represented them still contained many 'ancient' families.[20] Members of the landed gentry also occupied many of the other formal posts in the county: typical amongst the many listed sheriffs and undersheriffs in this period was Edward Rice of Dane Court, a landowner with plots in several parishes of East Kent, and an enthusiastic convener of county meetings.[21]

The 'Knights of the Shire', in terms of wealth and power, did not stand at the very peak of the 'county community'. Kent contained the seats of many peers, whose vast landholdings and seats in the House of Lords guaranteed them

[17] Twisden, *The Family of Twysden or Twisden*, 422.
[18] *Diary of Thomas Law Hodges*, BL Add MS 40,166 N.
[19] Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 12.
[20] For a discussion of the 'kinds' of men suitable to stand for a borough seat in Kent, which also favoured men of 'ancient' names, like Dering and Geary, see the Duke of Wellington to G.R. Gleig, 10/9/1832 to 14/9/1832, USSS WP4 2/222/99-103. The property qualification for county members was £600. It was £300 for borough members, Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, 289.
[21] *The Times*, 15/11/1820. Other sheriffs or nominees in this period included William Alexander Morland of Lamberhurst, John Shelley Sydney of Penshurst, Thomas Austen of Kippinton, John Powell Powell of Queex, Sir Henry Oxenden of Broome, Sir Henry Calder of Parkhouse. For an outline of the duties of sheriff, and the revival of interest in it by the gentry in the later eighteenth century, see Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, 409-410.

greater influence.[22] 'Ancient' Kentish families with Peerages, such as the Finch-Hattons (formerly the Finches), who owned estates in the county in addition to elsewhere, monopolised the senior unelected positions of power.[23] John Jeffries Pratt, first Marquis Camden, for example, held office as Lord Lieutenant from 1808 until his death in 1840. He inherited two substantial estates in the county at Bayham Abbey, and Wildernesse Park, near Sevenoaks, as well as land parcelled off in many other parishes. He received several commissions in the West Kent Militia, starting as an Ensign 1779, and peaking as a General between 1827 and 1832.[24]

Many of the Peers with seats in the county rarely held formal high office in the county, but still wielded a great deal of informal power. These included John Bligh of Cobham Hall, fourth Viscount of Darnley, County Meath, who owned large estates in West Kent (including Cobham Hall) and Ireland, and who, alongside his son, Edward, Lord Clifton, who inherited the titles in 1831, was a regular and enthusiastic attendee at county meetings.[25] One of the most vocal

[22] For an overview of the economic and political power of the peers, see F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ch. 2-3.

[23] George William Finch-Hatton, third Earl of Winchilsea and fourth Earl of Nottingham, succeeded to his titles in 1826. His father had been MP for Rochester, and George was named deputy lieutenant of the county in 1820. His main seats were at Eastwell Park, Kent, Kirby Hall, Northamptonshire, and Haverholme Priory, in Lincolnshire, which he bought and rebuilt in 1830, G. C. Boase, 'Hatton, George William Finch-, tenth earl of Winchilsea and fifth earl of Nottingham (1791–1858)', Wolffe, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9447>. See also Philip G. Dormer, *The Tenth Earl's Eastwell Connection* (Ashford: Eastwell publications, 1994).

[24] Pratt served as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland between 1795 and 1798, and was a supporter of Catholic Emancipation. According to Roy Foster, his Lieutenancy had little impact: he 'panicked' at the outbreak of the 'rebellion' in 1978 and was replaced by Castlereagh. He supported moderate parliamentary 'Reform' under Pitt, but opposed the Bills of 1831 and 1832, R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 264; M. Farrell, 'Pratt, John Jeffreys, first Marquess Camden (1759–1840)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22705>.

[25] For participation in meetings and interest in county affairs see Clifton to Camden, 18/10/1828, CKS U841 0235/6. For family background, see E. Cust, *Edward, Fifth Earl of Darnley and Emma Parnel his Wife* (London: Richard Jackson, 1913).

landowners was Philip, fourth Earl Stanhope, whose landed wealth spanned the county, nation and Empire. He presided over more than 3,400 acres of land on his Chevening Estate, many other parcels of land in the county, as well as over four thousand acres each in Devonshire and Ireland.[26] Stanhope had much influence as an agricultural 'reformer' and as the organiser of county meetings.[27]

Another family that exercised great informal power in Kent were the Marshams, whose main seat was Mote Park, near Maidstone. Their wealth was truly imperial: as well as extensive acreage in Kent, Buckinghamshire, Devon and Gloucestershire, they owned two estates in St Kitts, which had been inherited by the second Baron Romney on marriage in 1742. In 1817, the family owned three hundred and fourteen slaves, and they received a compensation payment after abolition in 1834.[28] A further landowner with imperial underpinnings was Lord Harris, of Belmont, Sittingbourne. Harris, himself the son of a humble Kentish curate, had risen to fame and a peerage in the army in India, waging war against Hyder Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan. His most famous victory was the capture of Seringapatam.[29] His prize money paid for the Belmont estate and lands in Ireland, and his family's income continued to be bolstered by Indian

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[26] Aubrey Newman, *The Stanhope's of Chevening: a Family Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 358-371.

[27] Notes on county meetings, CKS U1590 C200/1-4.

[28] Romney of the Mote, Estate papers, List of slaves, 1817, CKS U515 E304 (284-320); compensation payment, 1836, CKS U1644 T214. Other prominent Kentish slave owners included James Beckford Wildman, of Chilham Castle, who owned two estates in Jamaica. For more details see Nick Draper, 'Slave Compensation and the Metropolis, 1833-1840', forthcoming PhD thesis, University College London.

[29] Alastair W. Massie, 'Harris, George, first Baron Harris (1746–1829)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12387>. See also Stephen Rumbold Lushington, *The Life and Services of General Lord Harris, G.C.B., during his Campaigns in America, the West Indies, and India* (London: 1840), especially 444-452. Hyder Ali (or Haider Ali) was an eighteenth-century Indian military leader. His son, Tipu Sultan was also known as Tipoo Sahib.

investments and bounty. The income of one of his grandsons, Tom, considered a spendthrift, came entirely from a Calcutta loan.[30]

The basis of Kent's 'landed' wealth, then, came not solely from the Kentish land. Nevertheless, both MPs for the county and those who held unelected offices, had to be *perceived* as being in possession of chiefly '*Kentish*' landed wealth, as well as conforming to a certain 'type' of man. In 1812, Lord Camden commented on the difficulties of finding an appropriate 'West Kent man' to stand in a forthcoming election. One candidate was considered too old 'and will not exert himself', while perceptions of class and ethnicity excluded two others: 'Mr Woodgate has too lately emerged from the yeomanry...and there are great objections felt to Colonel Stratford as he is an Irishman'.[31] Nevertheless, the not insubstantial demands of the job, raised genuine issues about suitability that transcended cultural representations.[32] The physical capabilities of the 'Knight of a Shire' became a particular issue in the latter years of William Honeywood's stint as county MP. Ill-health prevented his attendance in Parliament and, more conspicuously, precluded his participation in the Penenden Heath meeting of 1828.[33] He stood down in 1831, in favour of the more active Thomas Law Hodges. Objections had been made to his tenure of the seat as early as 1820.

[30] Seringapatam prize fund, CKS U649 A 51/1; correspondence on Irish land, 1822, U624 C64/1-2; correspondence of Thomas Harris, U649 C6/5.
[31] Lord Camdem to 2nd Earl of Liverpool 12/10/1812, BL Add MSS, 38578 f.62. A large extract of this letter is printed in Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent',13.
[32] Sir Edward Knatchbull regularly lamented in his letters to his wife about how physically and mentally tiresome he found both his work as a parliamentarian and attending to his duties in Kent, often stating his keenness to retire. See for example, Sir Edward Knatchbull to Fanny Knatchbull, 14/7/1833, CKS U951/C126/3.
[33] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828.

Even though he owned estates in the county and was of an 'ancient' family, he was criticised for spending too much time at his Norfolk estates.[34]

Sir Edward Knatchbull and his ilk, then, when able to fulfil the criteria of land ownership and county standing, stood at the apex of political power, operating at the very heart of the Kentish 'public sphere' of the 'county community'. Nevertheless, his social standing, and even the appeal of his political beliefs, was far from the sole basis of his success. It was considerably bolstered by the conscious efforts he and his supporters made to associate the name of Knatchbull with popular aspects of Kentish culture. Success in this matter, however, could not be assumed, even for the scion of an 'ancient Kentish family', and took great effort.

ii. Political Culture

During their careers as 'Knights of the Shire', Knatchbull and Hodges were present at most of the major occasions on which the Kentish 'county community' came together. While Knatchbull, for example, socialised with family and friends of his own social 'level' and above, such as the Knights, Austens and the Finch-Hattons, spending much of the parliamentary season at his London residence, he was also required to interact with his electorate, the gentry and smaller landowners.

Election campaigns and parades required much organisation, and were meticulously planned for many months in advance. These demands increased in

[34] *KG*, 4/4/1820.

the years preceding the Great Reform Act, with the county elite increasingly having to justify their role and because of more regular, contested elections.[35] When Knatchbull was first elected in 1819, for example, it was possible to forego the formalities of dinners surrounding the event out of 'respect' to his deceased father.[36] In 1831, however, the struggling Tories and invigorated 'Reformers' undertook a relentless round of dinners, outdoor festivals, and county meetings, in addition to the usual formalities of the hustings and the election ground parades.[37]

The 'dinners' were not small affairs, but neither were they necessarily prestigious. The presence of aristocracy and large landowners had to be encouraged with industrious amounts of letter writing and invitations, while the gentry were cultivated with offers of 'stewardships'.[38] Newspaper accounts only listed the names of the more illustrious guests, but attendance was usually said to be into the hundreds, and bolstered by the presence of 'yeomen' and 'tenant farmers', who paid for the privilege. However the price of tickets would have precluded those without excess income. In 1829, a dinner organized by the Earl of Winchilsea, saw Knatchbull as a focus for rallying the 'Men of Kent', after the blow to Ultra-Tory pride dealt by Catholic Emancipation. Tickets (including a bottle of wine) were fourteen shillings. The ballroom was crowded and extra rooms erected for the occasion, 'adorned with evergreens' and banners with inscriptions (presented the previous year by the Earl of Winchilsea), including

[35] The county elections between 1816 and 1831 went uncontested. See, for example, *MJKA*, 4/4/1820.
[36] *MJKA*, 23/11/1819.
[37] *MGKC*, 25/1/31, 1/3/1831.
[38] Correspondence of the Earl of Winchilsea to the aristocracy and gentry of Kent, including the Austens, Twisdens and Harris's, on the subject of a dinner to congratulate Knatchbull, September 1829, NRO FH4519-4535.

one in 'Kentish grey'.[39] For a dinner in his honour at Maidstone in 1831, tickets were sold at Inns all over the county from Blackheath to Hythe.[40] In the aftermath of 1832, these dinners were formalised by the Tories into Conservative Associations, which were initially set up in East and West Kent in 1834. This was both part of a national trend in the setting up of registration associations - a recognition of the importance of these social occasions to political success - and a direct response to the attempts of 'Liberals' and 'Reformers' of West Kent, led by Thomas Law Hodges, to organise their followers into a political union.[41]

Eating and drinking was central to these diverse festivities, 'Liberal' or 'Reforming', 'Tory' or 'Conservative'. Spreads of food were detailed in the county papers, as were the names of the providers of such feasts, usually large landowners or publicans.[42] At the numerous dinners were held for Knatchbull, for example, and songs outlining his status were written in his honour.[43] These, typically, were drinking songs, that lauded Knatchbull as the most 'loyal, true and staunch' of 'Men of Kent', before calling for 'a bumper fill all round' in his name.[44] It was not unusual for over twenty toasts to be drunk, including the

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[39] *MJKA*, 20/10/1829.
[40] *KG*, 15/7/1831.
[41] *MJKA*, 16/9/1834; Brian Atkinson, 'Conservative and Liberal: National politics in Kent from the late 1820s to 1914', *Government and Politics in Kent, 1640-1914,* 144. Atkinson noted that Sir Edward Knatchbull described himself as a 'Conservative' in 1832, two years before Peel's Tamworth manifesto. Likewise, the pro-Catholic party on Penenden Heath described themselves as 'Liberals', before this term had any formal connection with a political party.
[42] *Maidstone Gazette and Kentish Courier* (hereafter *MGKC*), 19/2/1833. 'Dinner to Sir William Geary, baronet'. Here, the newly 'radical' editor of the *Maidstone Gazette* wryly commented on the 'groaning tables...lightened of their load', before the chairman rose to propose the first toast.
[43] *MJKA*, 17/11/1829; *MJKA*, 9/8/1831; *KG*, 29/4/1831, 15/7/1831, 5/8/1831; *The Times*, 14/11/1829, 21/11/1834.
[44] 'A song to be sung upon the occasion of the dinner to be given for Sir Edward Knatchbull, baronet, by his friends, 3rd August, 1831, at Sittingbourne' (Sittingbourne: J.E.Coulter, 1831). Reprinted in De Vaynes ed., *A Kentish Garland* (1880), 344.

King and Queen, the Army and Navy, the 'Yeoman of Kent' and 'the Men of Kent' and maybe even the 'Maids of Kent'.[45] Bands played and the company often joined in patriotic tunes – 'The Man of Kent', 'God Save the King', 'Roast Beef of Old England' and 'Rule Britannia' were all regulars.[46]

iii. Drinking Culture

Political dinners were an extension of a widespread and boisterous drinking culture, which rendered the public house the most common place in which people came together in Kentish towns and villages, frequented by people from all levels of society. Public houses, indeed, were the most widely available local public space. Numbers of taverns, public houses and hotels were steadily increasing over the period. In Canterbury in 1826, for example, there were seventy-six taverns and public houses, a figure which had increased to ninety-one in 1839. In Maidstone, the increase was from forty-two to fifty-two, and the town also gained an extra hotel.[47] Out of one hundred different political or social gatherings between 1827 and 1833, held in seventy different locations, fifty-six were held in public houses, twenty-five in outdoor locations (two of which were the yards of public houses), and sixteen were held in municipal buildings, such as town halls.[48]

The more prestigious public houses and Inns were as important as municipal buildings, such as the town halls, and were more regularly in use. The

[45] *MJKA,* 17/6/1831.
[46] For example, see George Warde Norman's notes on election dinners and speeches, 1833 to 1837, CKS U310/F63. Norman was a supporter of Thomas Law Hodges and a Whig 'Reformer'.
[47] *Pigot's Directory 1826,* 599-601, 633-4; *Pigot's Directory 1839,* 16-19, 95-97.
[48] Data gathered from *KG, MGKC, MJKA, KH, KC, The Times.*

Fountain's Hotel in Canterbury, a large public house with a committee room, was used, for example, for the dinner of the 'Friends of Sir Edward Knatchbull', in April 1831, and for an East Kent meeting to 'address the King', in May 1832.[49] Like the Dickensian pubs of *Barnaby Rudge* (1840/1) and the *Pickwick Papers*, it was an enormous maze of rooms and corridors: 'almost a little town in itself'.[50] Publicans could be respectable members of society. The Fountains' landlord, Samuel Wright, was 'well known and respected' by the gentry of the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as the distinguished persons who stopped at the Inn en route to the continent.[51] Another popular venue for political meetings was the Star Inn, Maidstone, which was also used for Sir William Geary's Tory election campaign, running up to the 1832 general election.[52] In the north-west, the Bell Inn, Bromley, was a regular meeting place of the local gentry for politics and socialising.[53]

Plebeian beer shops and alehouses existed in unregulated abundance, both in towns and in remote country villages. A great focus for anxiety for elite and bourgeois commentaries, they were frequented by 'most abandoned characters – poachers, smugglers, and night spectators'.[54] Predictably, the potential for intellectual exchange, and as a meeting place for workers of different occupations and social backgrounds, was negated in moralist accounts.[55] Anxieties surrounded the 'free-and-easy' drinking clubs, where 'decent' young

[49] *MJKA*, 14/4/1831, 12/5/1832.
[50] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 30.
[51] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 30.
[52] Papers regarding the 1832 election, CKS P309/16/48.
[53] *KG*, 4/2/1831.
[54] Appendix to the first report from the commissioners of the Poor Law, 196.
[55] PP 1833 Poor Law, Appendix to first report, 196; Reay , *Rural Englands*, 117-118.

men were led astray by alcohol, profane stories, and bawdy songs.[56] Nevertheless, they were an arena in which public opinion was formed. According to Cowton, in Canterbury: '...tradesmen, for the most part, spent their evenings away from their families, at the parlour of some inn, where the newspapers of the day were read by the best reader that could be selected...the scandal and talk of the city formed the topics of conversation over their grog and pints'.[57] The alehouses were blamed for playing a key role in the planning stages of the disturbances of 1830.[58]

While behaviour in alehouses was unruly, these places were not solely the domain of the poorer and more powerless members of society. In 1826, Canterbury Alderman Henry Cooper, a tanner by trade, was accused by military lawyers of committing the first assault at a brawl with soldiers in a disreputable alehouse.[59] Far from his reputation being tarnished, he went on to become mayor of the city.[60] Where the line was drawn between the 'respectable' places of politics and the 'disreputable' places of pleasure and vice, was decidedly unclear.

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[56] Cowton, *Autobiography,* 35; Gleig, *The Chronicles of Waltham*, 2-3, 54.
[57] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 31.
[58] PP 1833 Poor Law, Appendix to the first report, 196, 202, 212, 216.
[59] *Pigot's Directory* (1826), 600; *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 17.
[60] HO 40/21, 40/268. The solicitor acting for the military asserted that 'That the civil authorities of Canterbury do not exercise that control over the alehouse which the law requires, and that the dance at The Castle alehouse on the 16th May was altogether illegal (violation of a particular act for regulating and preventing disorder in alehouses). Cooper's duty...was to have immediately dispersed the meeting' but instead he 'participated in its amusements and committed the first assault'. For lists of mayors and aldermen of Canterbury, Burghmote Minute books, 1798-1835, CCA-CC-AC-11-13. Another reason that rowdy behaviour in alehouses was often overlooked was that members of municipal corporations were often involved in the brewing industry, PP 1835, Municipal Corporations III (England and Wales). Appendix II (South East and Southern circuits), 768.

This ambiguity, which could be traversed by Kentish men without much damage to their reputation, rendered political meetings in pubs and alehouses impossible for 'respectable' women. Women, of course, were present in inns and public houses, and often worked there. However, it was impossible for a woman of any social status to preserve her reputation in such an environment. Robert Cowton claimed that while he and his 'young fellow-citizens' happily frequented the rowdy drinking and dancing spots of Canterbury, 'no woman with any regard to propriety and decency would be seen at such a gathering', which was 'not one for the matrons and maidens of Kent, and would ill accord with the sanctity of domestic life'.[61] Maidens who were unfortunate enough to fall into these circles were quickly corrupted, such as the 'frail young creature of 17' encountered by the 14-year-old Cowton. Ruined by the wiles of a handsome infantry officer who had been stationed in the town, she had been shunned by her family, and driven to the alehouses where she 'danced like a Taglioni'.[62] Indeed, the representation of women in drinking spots was uniformly negative.[63]

iv. Farmers' Clubs and the Yeomanry Cavalry

As well as carousing late into the night, Knatchbull and Hodges had to maintain careful images as 'farmers' friends'.[64] This was a demand that increased through the period, as the fluctuating fortunes of agriculture led landowners and

[61] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 38-39.
[62] Cowton, Autobiography, 40-41.
[63] See, for example, *Morning Chronicle*, 28/8/1828. Peter Clark argues that, by the early nineteenth century, women were marginal in alehouse life, which had become more focusedly homosocial. When they did appear, they were usually perceived as disreputable, Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (London: Longman, 1983), 78-9, 30. No major work appears to have disputed this picture.
[64] See, for example, Knatchbull's intervention at the Meeting of the East Kent Agricultural Soceity, *MGKC*, 16/1/1821 and Maidstone Agricultural Society, *MJKA*, 2/12/1826.

farmers to increasingly organise themselves into pressure groups. The Maidstone based Kent Agricultural Society was formed in 1793, and was peopled by the large-landowners and the more powerful tenants. This was also true of the more local organisations, such as the Faversham Farmers Club, the first agricultural society in England.[65]

Members of the Faversham Farmers Club met in public houses or, sometimes, in each other's homes, and indulged in food, wine and conversation. Its members held positions of power at parish and borough level. John Holmes was a JP and town councillor for Faversham, while John Neame, part of the large East Kent kinship network of that name, was the first appointed chairman of the Faversham Board of Governors. Self-conscious about their status, they were particularly fussy about behaviour and standards. George Francis of Fairbrook was ostracised because of his association with Sir William Courtney, leader of an uprising in Bossenden Wood, while Thomas Dodd, a landowning 'gentleman', was remembered scornfully as he served wine of 'an inferior quality'.[66]

The Maidstone Agricultural Association was equally prestigious: chairman James Ellis, was one of the largest hop growers in the country, and Thomas Law Hodges was an active member. Overall, the Agricultural Associations were powerful, and their campaigning drive was reinforced by the increasing distress of the period. They produced numerous petitions to Parliament, mainly

[65] 'Notes on Members of Faversham Farmers Club', c.1930, from the original club minutes, CKS U229 Z6.
[66] Will of Thomas Dodd, Gentleman of Throwley, Kent, 8/1/1845, PROB 11/2010; 'Notes on Members of Faversham Farmers Club'. For more on the Battle of Bossenden Wood, see 5.3.iv.

opposing elements of free-trade. Moreover, the farmers, when organised together, could pursue their own interests even when they conflicted with those of the larger landowners. Both Knatchbull and Hodges were attacked by constituents when they did not conform to the image of the 'farmer's friend'. In 1826, Knatchbull supported the government in allowing the imports of foreign grain to alleviate distress and was attacked by the Kent and Canterbury agricultural association.[67] Another notable moment of conflict came in 1830, when tenants clashed with Winchilsea and Sondes at a meeting in Canterbury over the best responses to 'Swing'.[68]

Farmers' clubs stood alongside the Yeomanry and foxhunting as important points of contact between the more and less privileged members of the landed interest, and between rural and urban provincial society.[69] The very name Voluntary Yeomanry Cavalry was indicative of its status, and that of its members, above the balloted militia, a prerequisite usually being the ownership of a horse. They had been reduced in the years following the wars and almost ceased to exist in the late 1820s. However, following the 'Captain Swing' riots they were revived. There were rumblings in the 'radical' press about aristocrat's 'private armies' and military dictatorship, although this was an area in which the rank-and-file as well as the officers could exercise power.[70] Many farmers withheld their support in 1830, and in 1831 several troops resigned 'en masse'

[67] Knatchbull-Hugesson, *Kentish family*, 195.
[68] *MGKC* 9/11/1830; CPR, 6/11/1830.
[69] Nicholas Mansfield has argued that this was so for the later part of the century, and even the poorest members of rural society could feel included, 'Foxhunting and the Yeomanry: County Identity and Military Culture'. Paper given at the Institute of Historical Research, November 2005.
[70] *KH*, 9/6/1831.

because their commanding officers were not 'Reformers'.[71] Nevertheless, these times of conflict were balanced by the function of the Yeomanry as a social organisation that could bring the same groups together. Although only together officially for training for a week a year, the various Yeomanry troops met informally when not 'embodied'. The East Kent Militia and the Provender Group of Yeoman Cavalry in the 1810s met at a public house once a week for dining, drinking and gambling, traditions carried on into the 1820s and 30s.[72]

Moreover, after the initial period of controversy, the Kent Yeomanry proved remarkably popular with the wider public, an image partially maintained by the fact that they were never called out to suppress any major unrest in the period, such as Swing or the infamous Battle of Bossenden Woods, for which professional soldiers were called from Canterbury.[73] Untainted by the consequences of actual involvement in such events, the Yeomanry's appearance on the streets, their elaborate uniforms, and their lavish displays were received enthusiastically.[74]

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[71] *KH*, 9/6/1831; 'Records of the East Kent Yeomanry', Earl Camden to Brecknock and Winchilsea, November 1830, CKS EKY/AG2. The Cobham and Maidstone troops were among those who resigned, *MGKC,* 22/11/1831; *KG,* 18/10/1831.

[72] The officers and men dined together weekly, and gambling debts were to be paid in wine for the benefit of the whole company, 'East Kent Militia mess details, dining and gambling rules', 1812-1814, CKS U624/0776/3. At its dissolution in January 1828, the members of the Isle of Thanet troop of Yeomanry, past and present, spent a 'most convivial day' celebrating and dining together, *Mockett's Journal*, 116. Accounts of dinners are regular in the 1820s and 1830s, for example 'Dinner of the Dartford Yeomanry troop', *MGKC* 11/10/1831. In 1831, when some troops resigned through political disagreements (see above), others made a point of dining together, officers and men, to show their solidarity and patriotism. The Mitre troop dined together late into the evening, drinking toasts and singing 'The Man of Kent', 'Rule Britannia' and 'Flag of Liberty', *MGKC,* 22/11/1831. At another such dinner, Lord Winchilsea celebrated the 'good spirit' shown by young men in volunteering, *MGKC,* 20/9/1831.

[73] Dragoons and Lancers were called in to suppress the incendiaries, machine breakers and mobs in 1830, Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing,* 216; *KH*, 23/9/1830. For more on Sir William Courtenay, see P.G.Rogers, *Battle in Bossenden Wood, The Strange Story of Sir William Courtenay* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), and Reay, *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers.*

[74] *MJKA*, 30/5/1837.

v. The Kentish Newspaper Press

One of the most significant arenas in which the Kentish 'public sphere' expanded was the newspaper press. An increase in publications and readership was accompanied by shifts in conceptions of its audience and the ways in which it evoked a sense of the 'county community'.

The Kentish newspapers, like provincial journals elsewhere, were chiefly produced and written by small, urban businessmen, who were also usually booksellers, and the hosts of libraries or reading rooms.[75] They published other materials, including pamphlets, posters, books and memoirs, and often branched into selling patent medicines and other products, which could be advertised on the pages of their journals and sent out with vendors.[76] These were not completely independent businessmen, however. Political factions attempted to influence papers with financial backing, an activity increasingly evident in the late 1820s. The Reverend Gleig, for example, made some efforts to gain control of the *Kent Gazette* for the benefit of Wellington's political regime.[77] Nevertheless, editors also went to some efforts to maintain independence: James Cutbush of the *Maidstone Gazette* publicly condemned bribes offered him by the Tories to support Wyndham Lewis as the Maidstone candidate in 1832. Nevertheless further allegations in the *Kentish Observer* suggest that he

[75] Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press, Newspapers: Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 14-6.
[76] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 26; *'Bridging Three Centuries': The History of the Kentish Gazette* (Canterbury: Kent Gazette, 1929).
[77] Aspinall, 'Introduction' in Aspinall, ed., *Three Early Nineteenth-Century Diaries* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1952), lxi.

switched allegiances for more economic rather than ideological reasons: a 'Reforming' stance distinguished his paper from the Ultra-Tory *Maidstone Journal*.[78] Whatever their influences, the Kentish newspaper editors were deeply involved in the associational culture of politics themselves: John Vine Hall of the *Maidstone Journal*, John Chalk Claris of the *Kent Herald*, and James Cutbush all attended political meetings, while Hall and William Mudford were both supporters of the Canterbury Conservative Society, which was chaired by *Kentish Gazette* editor, Robert Smithson.[79]

All county newspapers of significance were based in Maidstone or Canterbury. This remained true throughout the 1820s and 1830s, but there were also many changes. At the start of the period, the *Kent Gazette*, the oldest and most prestigious county paper, with its predominantly Tory views, reigned supreme.[80] Its lesser rivals were the 'independent' *Kentish Chronicle* and *Kent Herald*, also based in Canterbury, the Tory-leaning *Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser*, and newcomer, *Maidstone Gazette and Kentish Courier*, founded in 1815. National news dominated, and was not reported from a 'county' perspective. The *Maidstone Journal*, for example, celebrated the news of the victory of Waterloo without a mention of the triumphant progress of the coach, which conveyed the tidings of victory, as it was cheered by the crowds over Maidstone Bridge.[81] The 'Men of Kent' were rarely mentioned. Copy was culled from publications such as *The Times*, although they were not entirely

[78] *Kentish Observer*, 8/11/1832, 15/11/32; Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 112.
[79] *KH*, 17/5/1832; *MJKA*, 16/9/1834; Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 116.
[80] Information on the early years of the Kentish Gazette, founded in 1768, can be found in *'Bridging Three Centuries': The History of the Kentish Gazette.*
[81] *MJKA* 27/6/1815.

lacking in 'definitive opinions'[82] As Hannah Barker has observed, even those articles taken from the Metropolitan press by regional papers, were usually chosen 'on a selective basis' that distinguished them from other competitors.[83] In 1816, for example, a debate at a county meeting on property tax was followed by particularly extensive coverage of the related debates in Parliament.[84] Throughout the period, a preoccupation amongst the Kentish press with 'insurrectionary' happenings in Ireland was bolstered by articles carefully selected from various Irish newspapers, including the *Dublin Evening Mail*, the *Cork Constitution* and the *Tipperary Free Press*.[85]

By 1837 there had been several structural changes. The *Kentish Chronicle* had folded following dwindling circulation, although not as the result of a saturated market.[86] In Canterbury alone, there were two new publications, the *Kentish Observer* in 1832 and the *Canterbury Weekly Journal and Farmers Gazette* in 1837, both from the same, Tory and 'protectionist', publishers. Meanwhile, smaller newspapers had been set up in several other centres, including Rochester and Dover.[87] Apart from this general widening of the market, other

[82] Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, ch.15. Aspinal argues that the regional press in this period consisted mainly of advertisements, 'local news' and articles which were 'parasitic' of the London papers. The press of a few industrial and commercially orientated towns were among the noted exceptions: *The Leeds Mercury* and *Manchester Guardian.*
[83] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 96.
[84] *MJKA,* 22/3/1816.
[85] Coverage of Ireland is particularly notable from 1823 onwards, see ch. 6.
[86] PP 1836 XLV, Account of stamps issued to the Provincial Press 1835/6. At the same period the *Kent Herald* was circulating over two thousand copies a month.
[87] *Pigot's Directory* (1839). In 1839, Dover listed two weekly newspapers, the *Dover Chronicle* and the *Dover Telegraph;* see also J. Amphlett to the Duke of Wellington, 24/1/1834, USSC Wellington Papers, Cinque Ports Correspondence. 2/222/117.

innovations in the period included clearer fonts and typefaces, which the *Maidstone Journal* introduced proudly to the public in early 1831.[88]

The major developments, however, were in the content. These were now self-consciously 'Kentish' newspapers that, from various perspectives, reported upon the activities of the 'county community', and upon 'county' interests. Local news took precedence over national. During the 'Swing' disturbances and the 'Reform' campaigns, the papers boasted of correspondents poised around Kent.[89] While Elections and county meetings in the early part of the period warranted several columns of coverage, the 1828 Penenden Heath meeting, and the gatherings of the subsequent years, were not just given devoted accounts in all of the major papers, but subjected to weeks of build-up and speculation, and debate in the aftermath. The *Kent Gazette*, for example, devoted no less than twelve, finely printed broadsheet height columns to its account of the meeting of 1828.[90] This, then, suggests a new focus of reporting emerging through the emotive debates surround Emancipation, in which 'national' questions were discussed and reported through the frame of the 'county'.

Once again, the fortunes of the 'agricultural interest', increasingly asserted against the demands of 'industrialists', provided an important arena in which distinctive interests were forged. For example, national news and news from other regions was carefully selected by the *Maidstone Journal* in 1829 to bolster its 'protectionist' stance, while editorials labelled free-trade a 'heartless theory'

[88] *MJKA*, 29/3/1831.
[89] *'Bridging Three Centuries', The History of the Kentish Gazette.*
[90] *KG*, 28/10/1828.

that 'threatened every branch of our national industry'.[91] This sentiment was enhanced further by the space given to similar minded correspondents. Two weeks later, a writer entitling himself 'A FREE BORN BRITON' was given a whole column to thunder 'TO THE AGRICULTURALISTS OF ENGLAND' about the evils of the doctrine.[92] The columns were bolstered by the opinions of correspondents, using names such as 'Man of Kent' and a 'Kentish farmer', or by volunteered addresses to the 'Men of Kent'.[93] Although they also covered the debates in Parliament, the struggles surrounding 'protection', Catholic Emancipation and 'Reform', as constructed in the Kentish press, took place primarily in the 'county community'.

These contests also took place between the county papers themselves. The debates over Catholic Emancipation produced a pitched battle between the pro-Emancipation, *Kent Herald*, and the other three major papers, as to who could claim the 'Men of Kent' and the triumph of 'Penenden Heath' for their own.[94] 'Reform' and the 'rage of party' that accompanied it brought about even more explicit debates about the sentiments of the 'county', and in turn allowed the papers to forge more distinctive identities. Once the two Maidstone papers became politically opposed in 1831, the personal insults traded between the editors very much resembled those of the blue and buff journals of Eatonswill![95] In 1836, they began quoting circulation figures literally at each other, both

[91] *MJKA*, 15/9/1829, 22/9/1829.
[92] *MJKA* 6/10/1829, 'To enrich foreign states while we are starving our own countrymen...may we not, without presumption, call England 'the glory or all lands', a land flowing with milk and honey?'...Englishmen! These are blessings which you possess above every other nation: they are your birthright, bought with the blood of your fathers'.
[93] In 1830, the Kent Gazette published a series of anti-'Reform' addresses to the 'Men of Kent' from a correspondence named 'Quntius Curtuis'. The pro-government stance, and his links to the paper, suggests this may have been G.R.Gleig. See for example *KG*, 25/4/1830, 3/5/1830.
[94] *KG*, 28/10/1828.
[95] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 156.

twisting the figures so that they appeared to have sold more. In conjunction with this, the *Gazette* launched a personal attack on *Journal* editor, John Vine Hall, entitling an article 'Sinner! This little article is for you!' - an allusion to Hall's allegedly successful publication. The attack concluded that it must be because of Hall's claim of selling 140,000 copies that 'he is fully authorised to circulate 139,000 falsehoods in a year in the *Maidstone Journal*, keeping the pot boiling in the bargain'.[96] The forging of these two newspapers' oppositional identities, nevertheless, proceeded in tandem. By the second half of the 1830s, both adopted slogans, printed in a similar font style, in every issue of their paper. The *Maidstone Gazette* stated it was 'The Liberal Gazette: 'The grand object of every form of Government is to ensure 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', and if a Government fail to secure that desirable end, it ought to be altered till it secures it''.[97] In reply, the *Maidstone Journal* asserted it was 'The Conservative Journal: 'Be assured that the laws which protect our civil rights grow out of the constitution, and they must fall or flourish with it''.[98]

The intended audience of the Kentish journals was clear enough. The *Kent Gazette*, with its staunch Tory views, was partially aimed at, and indeed read by, the higher, landed echelons of the landed 'county community' and was the county paper of choice for the Knatchbull family, for example.[99] Along with the two Maidstone papers, it also catered to the rural and urban 'middling' classes.

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[96] *MGKC*, 5/6/1836, 12/6/1836. Responses in *MJKA* throughout June and July 1836.
[97] *MGKC* statement, 1836. In 1829, during the Emancipation Crisis, the *Maistone Gazette* adopted a very different banner, although, given that Popery was perceived as a form of tyranny, not entirely contradictory to their slogan of 1836: 'The Romish Church...was always unchangeable in her faith and morality, and like her divine founder, was yesterday and today, and will be always the same till the communication of ages'.
[98] *MJKA*, 7/6/1836.
[99] Diary of Charles Henry Knatchbull, 14/1/1835, CKS U951 F22.

The *Maidstone Journal*, for example, appealed to advertisers as the perfect way of communicating to 'attorneys, auctioneers, merchants agriculturalists and traders'.[100] The *Kent Herald*, with its moderately 'radical' stance, explicitly appealed to the 'middle classes' of Canterbury.[101] Nevertheless, it appears to also have had a more plebeian following and, in 1830, was cited as one of the many alleged causes of the Swing riots, having been read aloud in alehouses.[102] Its resonance among the rural poor is also suggested by the last action of John Dycke, executed in December 1830 for incendiarism. Dycke suggested that a note condemning those who swore against him be inserted in the newspapers, which it duly was, in the *Herald*.[103] Indeed, the *Herald* was the most widely read paper during the period. In 1827, it became the second most widely circulated paper in Kent, after the *Gazette* and overtook it in popularity by the mid 1830s. Its circulation peaked in 1832, when it sold 66,000 copies.[104]

While the subject of the Kentish press was primarily male, newspapers read aloud in alehouses may have reached the ears of men and women. Newspapers were also accessed in the reading and assembly rooms and libraries, which were frequented by 'respectable' men and women of all ages.[105] These flourished in Kent's holiday resorts, but were less prominent in provincial towns, although there was some progress through the period.[106] In Maidstone, only one

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[100] *MJKA*, 14/6/1836.
[101] *KH*, 6/11/1828; *KH*, 6/11/1828; *KH*, 23/10/1828; *KH*, 9/10/1828.
[102] *KG*, 29/10/1830.
[103] *KH*, 30/12/1830.
[104] PP 1833 XXXII, Account of Stamps Issued to Provincial Press; PP 1836 XLV, Account of Stamps Issued to Provincial Press.
[105] Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 292; Lee Erickson, 'The Economy of Novel Reading. Jane Austen and the Circulating Library', in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 30, no. 4 (1990), 573-590.
[106] Seaside reading rooms are listed in increasing numbers in *Pigot's Directory* (1826), 643, 626, and *Pigot's Directory* (1836). Satirical accounts of the female contingent at Reading

bookseller, John Smith, was listed as having a Reading Room in 1826, although booksellers and stationers included a widow, Phoebe Wickham.[107] In 1831, a meeting was arranged advocating the need for a public library, attended enthusiastically by men and women.[108] However, by 1839 there were still only two reading rooms, both of which were also booksellers, and a Literary Institution in Week Street.[109] In the late 1820s, Canterbury also had at least four respectable libraries and reading rooms, including those of George Wood and Robert Colegate, both newspaper proprietors.[110] The growth extended to the smaller market towns. In 1827, Ashford just had one library, John Elliot's, also a printer, bookseller and stationers. By 1839, it was reported that 'a suite of assembly-rooms has, within these last few years been erected; there are also two good libraries and a reading room'.[111]

vi. Men, Women and Religious Associations

Kent, like most areas of England in the 1820s, had its fair share of evangelical societies, with regular meetings attended by the men and women of the middle and upper classes of society. The largest association, the Anglican denominated Kent Church Missionary Society was formed in 1822, an offshoot of the national organisation formed in 1799.[112] The Kent Auxiliary Bible Society was formed in 1812. Overall, however, evangelicalism was relatively weak in Kent. Although many high-ranking members of the Anglican clergy resided in

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rooms and bazaars can be found in Charles Dickens, 'The Tugg's at Ramsgate' in *Sketches by Boz,* 1836 (Ware: Wordsworth, 1993); *Diary of William Benge,* 12/9/1837.

[107] *Pigot's Directory* (1826), 632; Will of Thomas Wickham, Bookseller and Stationer of Maidstone , Kent, 6/4/1824, CPC PROB 11/1683.

[108] *MJKA*, 5/4/31, 19/4/31; *MGKC* 11/1/31; *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 91.

[109] *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 98.

[110] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 26.

[111] *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 3.

[112] Brian Stanley and Kevin Ward eds., *The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999* (Surrey: CMS, 2000).

Canterbury, it is generally agreed they did not embrace the evangelical spirit until at least the 1840s.[113] Indeed, the incarnation of the Kent Church Missionary Society provoked criticism from members of the establishment, such as the Reverend Gleig, who believed missionary work was not within the parameters of Christian doctrine.[114] Canterbury in the 1820s and 1830s, indeed, was not a very evangelical city: Robert Cowton complained that it lacked even the religiously-minded improvement associations that distinguished urban hubs in Birmingham and elsewhere.[115]

Nevertheless, there was a discernible increase in evangelical activity in the late 1820s, which included an explosion in auxiliary organisations. For example, at the meeting of the Kent Bible Society in 1829, the 'excellent health and spirits' of the auxiliaries at Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and in the south of the county were celebrated; it was noted that a new society at Lamberhurst had just been established.[116] Notable among the flourishing new societies were those which addressed Catholicism and the perceived irreligiousness of the Irish. This included the Reformation Society, which was devoted to the moral reformation of Irish Catholics, and the Sunday School Society for Ireland.[117]

This new sense of industry was attributable to the endeavours of individual evangelical spirited clergyman, Anglican and dissenting, such as the Reverends

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[113] See ch. 2.2.ii.
[114] G.R. Gleig, *Letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull baronet, on his accepting the office of President at a meeting of auxiliary church missionary Association held at the town Hall, Maidstone, on 14th August last*, 1823; Thomas Bartlett, *Letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull in reply to Reverend G. R. Gleig*, 1823, Both BL.
[115] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 32; for Birmingham, see Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 269.
[116] *MKJA*, 8/9/1829.
[117] Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860*, 32-35; *MJKA*, 28/7/1829.

Thomas Bartlett and Miles Stapleton, and prominent members of the 'county community'. The kind of people to be found at Anglican evangelical meetings included Sir Edward Knatchbull, the Earl of Winchilsea, as well any many other notable county names. However, unlike the 'political' gatherings in Inns, women often accompanied their husbands to 'religious' meetings.[118] For example, although she never spoke, Georgiana, Countess of Winchilsea, often graced the platform next to her husband at the meetings of the KCMS and Lady Barham was a regular subscriber to the Reformation Society.[119] The wife of Reverend Stapleton accompanied him to the meetings of the Reformation Society and the KCMS. Women were also prominent upon lists of subscribers. For example, out of twenty donors from Chatham and Rochester to the CMS in 1826, nine were women. The children of Chatham Sunday School, represented as one donor, had between them raised over £5.[120] Nevertheless, despite the presence of women and children, county and national 'politics' did not stay completely off the agenda. Notably, at the meetings of the Reformation Society there was a substantial overlap in membership with the politically anti-Catholic Brunswick Society.[121] At the first meeting of the society after the passing of the Emancipation Bill, the president of the Society and prominent Brunswicker,

[118] For a discussion of the exclusion of middle and upper-class women from most political associational culture, which was partially self-imposed, see Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World, 1580-1800* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 201-204.
[119] *MJKA*, 10/7/1827. Georgiana was the 10th Earl's first wife.
[120] Records of the Kent Church Missionary Society (hereafter KCMS), Birmingham University Special Collections, CMS/ACC 306 D1, Fourth annual report, 1826, 16.
[121] Thirty-seven of the prominent members of the Brunswick Society were also connected with the Reformation Society, including members of many of the 'ancient' families: Brydges, Knatchbull, Finch-Hatton, Dering and Filmer. Names listed in *MJKA*, 10/7/1827, 10/6/1828, 9/6/1829, 4/11/1828; *MGKC*, 23/9/1828.

Colonel J. Wingfield Stratford, concluded by explaining why he believed those who changed their minds on 'the late great question' had turned 'rats'.[122]

The boundaries between the 'political' and 'non-political' arenas in the Kentish 'county community' then, like those between the 'respectable' and otherwise, were blurred. Indeed, in the highly charged political atmosphere of the late 1820s and early 1830s, omnipresent discussions of politics could hardly have avoided female ears. In 1831, according to an anecdote in the *Maidstone Gazette*, a young lady dancing with a young gentleman at the Maidstone ball, informed him at the end of a quadrille that she was much obliged that he had not talked about the 'Reform question'. She claimed it was the first time someone had *not* done so for over a month![123]

However, the role of women in politics was not restricted to the incidental or accidental. Elite women played an important role in 'county society' and, depending upon their position in the family, wielded great power in the domain of the country house where women's organisational skills and emotional support bolstered their men's contributions.[124] Fanny Knatchbull, for example, entertained the Earl of Winchilsea and numerous other dignitaries on the eve of the Penenden Heath meeting in 1828.[125] Other Tory women became more explicitly involved, including the wife of Sir William Geary who was accused

[122] *MJKA*, 10/6/1828, 9/6/1829. This discussion runs counter to Wollfe's suggestion that the Reformation Society remained 'unmixed with politics', Wolffe, *Protestant Crusade*, 44.
[123] *MGKC*, 5/4/1831.
[124] For an overview text on their contributions see Pamela Horn, *Ladies of the Manor. Wives and Daughters in Country House Society, 1830-1918* (Strood: Sutton, 1991), see especiall chs. 5 and 7;
[125] Diary of Fanny Knatchbull, 23/10/1828, CKS-U951/F24.

of canvassing for her husband at a horticultural fair.[126] Meanwhile, the contributions of the more prestigious Countess of Winchilsea echoed fashionable chivalric customs, presenting banners and awards at occasions such as Yeomanry field days.[127]

Presenting banners and displaying colours during electioneering indicated female support for candidates, their active engagement in forms of politicisation and the existence of forms of 'virtual representation'.[128] At the 1835 election, for example, Sir Edward Knatchbull's procession was headed by a 'very handsome banner', said to have cost £500 and presented by the 'ladies of the county''.[129] As Matthew Cragoe has demonstrated, moreover, attracting the wives of the borough and county electors was identified by some canvassers (and bribers!) as the surest way to gain votes, which were arguably the property of the family rather than the male individual.[130] Many contemporary accounts of women in politics nevertheless presented a less balanced and optimistic picture. The visibility of active female support was often drawn upon to undermine that status of politicians, readily labelled as 'petticoat' influence.[131] Accounts of large-scale occasions at which the 'county community' came together, such as

[126] Norman Haill to W.B.Haill, 3/6/1834, CKS U310 C209.
[127] *MGKC*, 26/7/31; *MJKA*, 26/7/31.
[128] For further discussion of the multiple ways that women gained a stake in provincial politics, see Gleadle and Richardson, 'Introduction. The Petticoat in Politics: Women and Authority', in Gleadle and Richardson eds., *Women in British Politics*, 158; Kathryn Gleadle, 'Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna and the Mobilisation of Tory Women in Early Victorian England', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no, 1 (2007), 108.
[129] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 67. For the displaying of colours by ladies in carriages at the 1831 election, see *MJKA*, 17/5/81.
[130] Matthew Cragoe, 'Jenny Rules the Roost': Women and Electoral Politics, 1832-1868, in Gleadle and Richardson eds., *Women in British Politics*, 158.
[131] Matthew Cragoe, 'Jenny Rules the Roost', 161. For an unusual attack on 'petticoat politics' that imagines a future national parliament dominated by women, see *MJKA*, 11/10/1836.

county meetings, also tended to marginalise women and their contributions. It is these gendered cultural representations of the 'county' that I will now explore.

3. The 'County on Display'[132]

i. County Meetings

The most expansive, although irregular, way in which the 'county community' came together was at county meetings.[133] These were widely reported and symbolic occasions, intended to ascertain the opinion of the county on an important political matter. The first post-war county meeting, in February 1816, was chiefly the elite's response to the downturn in the fortunes of the agricultural interest, considering modifications to the tithe laws, property tax and advocating 'economy in every department of the state...'.[134] It was a 'respectable, but not very numerous meeting of the gentleman and yeomanry of the county'. Chiefly, the 'county interest' was imagined as that of the landowners and the meeting was represented in accounts as the debates between the Whig and Tory elites.[135]

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[132] I draw here on the theories of Tony Bennett, inspired by Foucault, in suggesting that the county meeting functioned in a similar way to exhibitions, such as the 1851 display in Hyde Park, where the public disciplined themselves, at least partially, into specific visions of society, Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), ch. 2, 'The Exhibitionary Complex'.

[133] According to R. E. Foster, county meetings were an 'extension of the ancient county court' made more controversial in the late eighteenth century by 'radicals' such as Henry Brougham and Cobbett. They were convened, on the request of freeholders by the High Sheriff, R.E.Foster, *Leadership, Politics and Government in the County of Hampshire during the Lord Lieutenancy of the First Duke of Wellington,* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton (1986), 264.

[134] *KG*, 27/2/1816.

[135] *KG*, 27/2/1816. In an early configuration of the political rivalries that were to define the next twenty-five years, the Tory interest, was represented by County MPs Sir William Geary (senior) and Sir Edward Knatchbull, who defended the standing Army and property tax, with the help of 'young' Mr George Finch-Hatton, against attacks by Charles Larkin of Rochester and Thomas Rider.

The popular unrest of the late 1810s elsewhere, and the aftermath of 'Peterloo', led to an elite backlash against popular participation at such gatherings.[136] After 'labourers' demanding employment intruded upon the next county meeting, questions were raised in the press about their 'respectability'.[137] Following this, Kent did not participate in the 1819 round of public meetings in the wake of 'Peterloo', although 'radicals' in neighbouring Surrey responded to the 'sufferers at Manchester' supporting the sentiments of the victims, as did the 'people' of Hampshire.[138] Neither was the Tory reaction manifested in this public form: a letter from a freeholder, in December 1819, called for the 'main body of Kentish men' to show their 'loyalty to the throne' but nothing was forthcoming.[139]

The 1821 and 1822 county meetings illustrated moderate shifts in the direction of new conceptions of representation, and were initiated by the Whig aristocracy. The 1821 meeting, organised by Lord Darnley and the Earl of Thanet, was held despite Tory High Sheriff, John Sydney of Penshurst, refusing to endorse it.[140] This meant that the meeting had to be held in the town hall, rather than outside, in order not to risk violating the Seditious Meetings Act. Yet, even this and the 1822 county meeting, convened to 'consider...a petition to Parliament on the distressed state of the country and effective representation of the people', was no radical departure. At the latter, there were only seven wagons drawn up for the accommodation of speakers and others.[141] The farmers

[136] Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, 252-3.
[137] *KG*, 18/6/1816.
[138] *MJKA*, 12/10/1819; *The Times*, 12/10/1819.
[139] *MJKA*, 14/12/1819.
[140] *KG*, 25/12/1821.
[141] *MGKC*, 23/6/1824.

and 'yeoman' were not represented as an important part of the constituency. Indeed, they were central to the agenda of William Cobbett alone, who demanded that the 'yeomen' petition the peers to give up their privileges before 'each Englishman should appear like the famished and forlorn picture of Ireland'.[142]

Cobbett courted controversy in more ways than one when he attempted to take the stand. Speaking at county meetings was, by custom, the prerogative of freeholders and his participation was queried upon these grounds.[143] Freeholders, and particularly the large landholders, dominated proceedings throughout the period, although the voices of tenant farmers were heard at smaller political gatherings.[144] For example, at a meeting in 1830, William Cobbett claimed that a petition moved by Mr Bradley, 'a yeoman', was carried 'in spite of all the efforts of the aristocracy'. Mr Frances Bradley Esquire, was still a substantial landowner, with parcels of land in at least eleven Kentish parishes, most of which was leased to tenants.[145] The worst opprobrium was reserved for real 'outsiders', most notably the Catholic Association's Richard Lalor Shiel, whose pro-Catholic speech, never given because of the jeering on Penenden Heath, still found its way into the columns of *The Morning*

[142] Notices and papers on 1822 public meeting, CKS U1590 C200/2; *MJKA*, 25/6/1822; *MGKC* 18/6/1822.
[143] Supporters shouted that Cobbett had a freehold in Greenwich and that he was allowed to speak, *MJKA*, 25/6/1822; *MGKC* 18/6/1822.
[144] Meeting at the Canterbury Corn Exchange, *MGKC*, 9/11/1830. Recorded speakers included Winchilsea, Sondes and Henry Lees, a small tenant farmer from Eastling. See Eastling Tithe Award Schedule, 11/9/1843, <http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Maps/EAG/02.htm>.
[145] *CPR*, 20/3/1830. Parishes in which Bradley owned land included Ryash, Bapchild, Borden and Staplehurst. It was mainly woodland and pasture, which he leased to tenants. See various tithe map listings at <www.kentarchaeology.org.uk>.

Chronicle.[146] Nevertheless, there was a discernible shift, between 1822 and 1830, in attitudes to the attendance of non-freeholders at county meetings and in the social and geographical spaces which they occupied.

ii. Penenden Heath: A 'County Space'

In first part of the 1820s, county meetings took place in Maidstone, in the town hall or in the High Street. Towards the end of the 1820s, however, outdoor locations, which could accommodate more people, even if not all could actively participate or influence the proceedings, became more common. Penenden Heath, in particular, took on significance as the 'traditional' meeting place of the 'Men of Kent' since 'time immemorial'.[147]

Penenden Heath was one mile from the centre of Maidstone, in the parish of Boxley. It was an exposed and sometimes windswept tract of land with an open vista, from which one could see the rolling hills that intersected the whole of the county.[148] It had great historical resonance as a meeting place. The Saxon 'Shiremoot' had met there, and it had hosted significant trials and gatherings from the pre-Norman period to the present.[149] Polling took place there for county elections and at the centre was the 'shire house', where the returns were assessed.[150] By the late 1820s it was in a 'shabby' state and plans were drawn up for a new one in 1829.[151] However, Penenden Heath's legacy was not just one of

[146] *Morning Chronicle,* 25/10/1828.
[147] *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 90.
[148] *MJKA*, 4/11/1828.
[149] Bates, 'The lands pleas of William I's reign: Penenden Heath revisited', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,* vol. 51 (1978), 1-19.
[150] J. M. Russell, *The History of Maidstone* (Rochester: John Halliwell, 1978), 14-15.
[151] Specification, estimate and tenders for construction of a new Shire House on Penenden Heath and report on the state of the old one; CKS-Q/G/B/12, 1829-30; Contracts for building a new Shire House at Penenden Heath, CKS-Q/G/Ac/4, 1830.

law enforcement. Like Maidstone as a whole, from where Watt Tyler marched in 1381, it had been a site of popular resistance, notably when Jack Cade mustered his 'army' for his rebellion of 1450 in the name of the 'commons of England'.[152]

Usages of the space had changed even over the past decade and a half. In 1816, around one third of the Heath was enclosed to provide labour for the unemployed of the parish.[153] By 1831, it had also ceased to function as a place of execution, residents having long complained of the 'spectacle' and 'levity' caused by these grisly occasions.[154]

The watershed moment for popular participation in the county meeting, and a moment of 'invention of tradition', was the great anti-Catholic rally of October 1828 on Penenden Heath.[155] In the late 1820s, Catholic Emancipation united people from all classes, and provided an issue through which the voice of the 'county' was evoked. Widespread campaigns were organised by the Kent Brunswick Constitutional Club, who became known as the 'Brunswickers'. This group was an auxiliary branch of the generic Brunswick Constitutional Club, a society that had been founded by Lord Kenyon in London that July. Kenyon was part of the parliamentary Ultra-Tory faction, hard-line supporters of the Established Church and the 'Protestant Constitution'. The idea of the 'Protestant Constitution' was not unlike much of the more generic constitutional rhetoric that was used to legitimate diverse political causes in the early nineteenth century

[152] J. Crane Brown, *Boxley Parish* (E.J. Dickinson, Maidstone, 1892), 24-26.
[153] J M Russell, *The History of Maidstone* (Rochester: John Halliwell, 1978), 14-15.
[154] Letter from residents of Penenden Heath for the removal of the place of execution from there, 1820, CKS-Q/G/B/2; *MJKA,* 28/8/1831.
[155] Hobsbawm & Ranger ed., 'Introduction' in *The Invention of Tradition.*

throughout Britain and the Empire.[156] For some opponents of Catholic Emancipation, such as the pious Lord Bexley, the preservation of the 'Protestant Constitution' mattered because of deeply held religious beliefs.[157] The Ultra-Tories basically argued that the 'constitution of 1688', the state of affairs that had been settled at the Glorious Revolution, was perfect and any incursion into it, such as by admitting Roman Catholics to Parliament, would lead to national decline.[158]

Alarmed at the prospect of Emancipation in 1828, the Ultra Tories decided to mobilise at the 'grass-roots' level. According to G.I.T. Machin, the Brunswick Club was conceived along the lines of the elitist anti-Catholic Pitt Clubs, but with a membership to overlap with the more populist Orange Institution in Ireland.[159] Commentators at the time compared them, particularly the Kent Association, with the Catholic Association.[160] The intent of popular appeal was evident in the speeches of its founder members. Kenyon issued a rallying cry to the country in sympathetic journals such as *The Standard* and *John Bull*, declaring 'Let every parish declare its sentiments...let them unite in a holy and constitutional declaration of their attachment to the Protestant Constitution of

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[156] Vernon, 'Introduction', in Vernon ed., *Rereading the Constitution*, 9.
[157] Lord Bexley, a Kentish landowner and prominent ultra-Tory who had held various high governmental offices, was not present at the meeting because of his misgivings about 'club government'. However, his reasons for supporting the 'Brunswickers' cause, based on religious doctrine, can be found outlined in many letters and speeches, including 'An address to the Freeholders of the County of Kent', printed in *MGKC*, 4/11/1828. See also FH 4567, Bexley to Winchilsea, 2/9/1828.
[158] This argument is outlined in many of Lord Kenyon's and Lord Winchilea's speeches. Kenyon: House of Lords, 28/4/1828, *Hansard*, New Series, vol.19, 177; House of Lords, 16/3/1829, *Hansard*, New Series, vol. 20, 1071-8; Winchilsea: House of Lords, 10/3/1829, *Hansard*, New Series, vol. 20, 934-5.
[159] Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics,* 131 to 134.
[160] Earl Darnley, House of Lords, 13/2/1829, *Hansard*, New Series, vol. 20, 307; The Times, 21/10/1828; London Magazine, quoted in *KH,* 9/10/1828.

these realms as their dearest birthright'.[161] Efforts were then made to form provincial clubs to evoke the support among the mass of the 'respectable' population, and sometimes beyond. Although the core of the 'Brunswickers' were its paying members, the boundaries which defined suitable followers for the cause were never clearly drawn.[162]

Their greatest success in attracting support, outside of Ireland, was in Kent. The Earl of Winchilsea first assembled the Kent Brunswick Constitutional Society in Maidstone, in September, 1828, in confederation with other prominent members of the 'county community', including Knatchbull, Maidstone M.P, Sir John Wells, Marquis Camden, Lord Bexley, and leading members of various other 'ancient' Kentish families.[163] They had numerous followers who were, or had been, members of the military and who had associations with the various barracks in the area, particularly those in Maidstone and Canterbury.[164] Another notable group among their supporters were the clergy, including Anglican ministers, and some from the more conservative dissenting groups, such as the Methodists.[165] However, within weeks of the club's formation, numerous reports appeared indicating that it was the interest taken by the 'yeomen' and 'middling ranks of farmers' that had swelled their ranks to over 800.[166] As well as organising a vast county meeting on Penenden Heath, the 'Brunswickers', and their opponents, then proceeded to organise a mass petitioning campaign.

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[161] *The Standard*, 1/9/1828, *John Bull*, 8/9/1828, *KG*, 9/9/1828.
[162] Subscriptions for the Kent branch were paid at local banks, *KH*, 16/10/1828.
[163] *MGKC*, 23/9/1828.
[164] *MGKC*, 23/9/1828.
[165] Richard Lalor Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political.* Edited, with notes by M. W. Savage, 2 vol. (London: 1855), 194.
[166] *The Times*, 16/10/1828, *Spectator*, 18/10/1828.

The Penenden Heath meeting of 1828 was the moment when the Tory contingent of the county elite seized the initiative, taking over the agenda set in the previous decades by 'radicals', and claimed to speak for the 'people' and the 'county' against a government that could be defined as running against 'public opinion'. It was attended by men and women of all classes, in their tens of thousands, and wide participation was encouraged.[167] Following this, the county meeting on Penenden Heath became a much more regular occurrence. Out of six in the five years following 1828, only one was held in the High Street, Maidstone, and that was transferred from the Heath because of heavy rain.

iii. The 'County on Display'

In what ways then, were conceptualisations of the 'county' manifested upon Penenden Heath? Descriptions of the 1828 meeting and later gatherings attest to visions of society influenced by ideas of military structure and hierarchy amongst the public men, and the remainder of the populace, that made up their ranks. The outdoor location was often described like a field of battle, albeit with only one army. Great emphasis was placed on order and regiment: men in their thousands were lined up on horseback; the less wealthy were arranged into quadrants on foot. Flags flew gaily and martial music was played. The aristocracy and gentry were geographically central, mounted in wagons, named in person, and speakers; the 'freeholders' and/or 'sturdy yeomanry', unarticulated in print gave their support merely through their presence and appearance; the women, decorous and silent, were located on the peripheries;

[167] See ch. 5.2.i-iii.

and the 'wagonners, labourers, and ploughmen', enjoyed the atmosphere (and ale), unquestioning and acquiescent.[168] Dissenting voices could only undermine these perfect, regimented scenes and were rarely visible to chroniclers. It was only in the accounts of detractors that the other side of the picture was recorded: the pickpockets, the mud and the indulgence of the crowd in too much free ale. The disillusioned correspondent of the *Kent Herald* saw only the 'village Squirearchy, the 'Rural Solomons', the proverbial 'dunderheads' of English society' and the 'Parsonry of all Kent'. With no middling classes, the company then '...dropped at once into livery servants, draymen and ploughboys'.[169] This was not *his* vision of the 'Men of Kent'.

In the 1828 meeting, the Heath itself played a 'starring' role. The landscape was vividly described, as in the *Maidstone Journal*, where 'the romantic village of Boxley, and the majestic chain of hills...formed a fine background' to the 'hum of the congregated masses, the distant shouts of applause, and the swelling tones of martial music...conveyed through the ear to the heart sensations which no tongue can describe.[170] Textually, the Heath provided the perfect, historically charged, rural and picturesque backdrop, which fuelled links between the 'natural' manifestations of the Kentish countryside and the perceived independent spirit of the 'Men of Kent'. It also provided a landscape in which a wide spectrum of people could be accommodated, and seen to represent the whole 'county'.

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[168] *KG*, 28/10/1828, *MJKA*, 4/11/1828; T.L. Hodges, *Report of the speeches [in relation to Catholic Emancipation] delivered at the Kent County Meeting, holden on Penenden Heath, October 24, 1828* (Chatham: J.Ridgeway, 1828). For further analysis of the Penenden Heath meeting of 1828, see Beresford, 'The Men of Kent and the Penenden Heath Meeting, 1828'.
[169] *KH*, 6/1/1828.
[170] *MJKA*, 4/11/1828.

The Heath itself became a rallying cry, particularly to 'Reformers' who, despite scorning the 'Brunswickers'' cause, seized upon the renewed meanings that the anti-Catholics had attributed to it. At the announcement of a county meeting in late 1831, for example, the *Kent Herald* cried: 'Kent is summoned... Penenden Heath shall again resound to the united voice of thousands in the cause of loyalty, freedom and Reform'.[171] Penenden Heath had thus been reconfigured, mainly as a result of the meeting of 1828, as place of truly 'popular' public expression and a space where one could speak on behalf, and to ascertain the opinion of, the 'county'.

In 1831 and 1832, the symbolism of the 'Men of Kent' and Penenden Heath was echoed throughout the county at 'Reform Festivals', at which outdoor locations were also celebrated and embellished. At Wrotham, a village west of Maidstone, a 'commodious booth' was neatly fitted up in a field near the Church...on the lawn was planted a beautiful colour, displaying the 'Kentish horse' with the inscription 'Invicta' beneath.[172] The tricolour and the Union Jack flew together from the steeple of the church. While the wealthier citizens, and the 'yeomen' and 'farmers', played the prominent roles, and were the ones who sat down to dinner, the whole of the village could participate: each community had its own 'Penenden Heath', at which 'unanimity' and ' majority', while hierarchical, could be celebrated.[173] Ironically, it was also at this time that Penenden Heath lost its centrality to the county in another respect. From 1832, county elections were divided in two, and East Kent henceforth elected its own

[171] *KH*, 29/9/1831
[172] Influence of the French Revolution of 1830 on the Kentish 'Reform' Festival is very evident. For an account of its influence in high politics and wider culture see Roland Quinault, 'The French Revolution of 1830 and Parliamentary Reform', *History*, vol. 79 (1994).
[173] Coxheath 'Reform' Dinner, *MGKC*, 28/8/1832.

'Knights of Shire' on Barham Downs, near Canterbury. Only West Kent returned its two members on Penenden Heath. This change caused some consternation, but the 'picturesque' landscape of Barham Downs offered similar possibilities.[174]

In the 1830s, incidents of the 'county on display' were not restricted to elections or political meetings or newspaper accounts. Military displays were also useful to those who wished to project a semblance of unity to the 'county community', and bolster the power of the 'landed interest'. The Earl of Winchilsea, Commander in Chief of the East Kent Yeomanry Cavalry, and the Earl of Brecknock, of the West, both held annual field days throughout the 1830s at their country estates. Both lavished great expense on the food, drink and entertainment, which often went on for several days.[175] These events 'imparted considerable gaiety'. Journalists saw no real conflict between locals enthusiastically cheering the Yeomanry, and the piecemeal conflicts between regular troops and townspeople that took place on the streets of Kent's garrison towns.[176]

Special guests were invited to review the men, invariably heroes of the Napoleonic wars. In 1832, the Earl of Winchilsea invited the Duke of Wellington. The Duke reviewed the troops and then feasted with the company.[177] Accounts of the relationship between the Duke and the Earl were mixed. Only three years before, the pair had fought a duel over the issue of

[174] *KG*, 5/7/1832.
[175] Accounts include John Mockett's description of the1799 Field Day at Mote Park, *Mockett's Journal*, 50; *KH*, 28/7/1831; *KG*, 20/7/1831, 3/7/1832, 30/5/1837.
[176] See ch. 2.2.viii.
[177] *MGKC*, 3/7/1832.

Catholic Emancipation. The stridently Tory *Kentish Observer*, keen to portray a sense of unity, described them sitting side-by-side, 'emulous only in their efforts to forward the welfare of their common country'. The Duke, the Earl and the display of unity between officers and men was a symbol of the eternal resistance of 'Old England' to the forces of atheism and republicanism. The 'radical' *Kent Herald* enjoyed the display but was keen to show cracks in this apparently unconquerable fortress. Its editor playfully noted that the Duke and the Earl looked 'daggers' at each other throughout the whole proceedings.[178]

George Bryant Campion captured the 1837 Grand Field Day in a painting (see Figure 4). The rank and file of the East and West Kent Yeomanry Cavalries, can be seen carrying out their manoeuvres in front of their commanders, the Earls of Winchilsea and Brecknock. The aristocracy and gentry were presented as the Captains and Generals of the 'Men of Kent', a role filled by the rank-and-file Yeomanry. These were actually a mix of the rural and urban middling classes, tenant farmers standing alongside shopkeepers, blacksmiths, and country doctors.[179] Nevertheless, in the picture they followed with loyalty and obedience. Even the crowds appeared to be following commands. They watch in regimented rows. It is only the very elite that broke out of this, who mingled and chatted, some of them in uniforms. These figures each represented well-know individuals on the Kentish public scene, including Knatchbull and Winchilsea.

[178] *KH*, 11/10/1832.
[179] Listings of Yeomanry Cavalry, East and West Kent regiments, 1820-1840, CKS, L/CS. For the social make-up of the Hampshire Yeomanry, which proved to be similar, R.E.Foster, *Leadership, Politics and Government in the County of Hampshire,* Appendix D.

Figure 4. 'To Lt-Col the Earl of Winchilsea of the East and Lt-Col the Earl of Brecknock of the West. The East and West Kent Regiments of Yeomanry Cavalry.' Painting by George Bryant Campion, engraved by Charles Hunt. Published by J. Smith, Maidstone and H. Ward, Canterbury.

The majority of the smaller, anonymous spectators in the background were also well dressed, although among them are a few round smock coats, distinctive of the 'yeomen' who truly did work the land. The women were watchful and tight lipped: although they were placed prettily in the foreground of the picture, they were on the peripheries of the display and of the gala field. Even the landscape was regimented and controlled: the vista opened up perfectly down to one of Baron Romney's country seats, Mote Park, which was opened to the public for the whole week of the display.[180] Little cultivated fields and gently rolling hills evoked perfectly the spirit of the 'garden of England', the home of the Men of Kent. Indeed, Campion's image captured a powerful vision of a hierarchical and well-ordered society, one that had its absences and underlying tensions: the labouring poor are conspicuously invisible in this landscape.[181]

This particular image, as a hand-coloured engraving, was issued on subscription to over two hundred people. Although at the top of the list were the dignitaries involved, all of whom ordered several copies for their multiple homes, it also included rank and file members of the cavalry and unrelated enthusiasts, including many women. The majority of the purchasers were listed as coming from the urban centre of Maidstone, although the gentry and gentlemen farmers accounted for roughly a third of subscribers.[182] These scenes, it appears, were more than just entertainment or decoration, evoking strong emotions and

[180] *Kentish Observer*, 25/5/1837.
[181] *MJKA*, 30/5/1837; *MGKC*, 30/5/1837.
[182] Lists of subscribers were published in both *MGKC* and *MJKA*, 6/6/1837 and 13/6/1837. The lists of subscribers were dominated by 'gentlemen' without profession, but also included three butchers, a surgeon, shoemaker, hoyman, parish clerk, brewer, grocer, chemist, bricklayer, plumber, corn dealer, stonemason and Elizabeth Richardson, the female proprietor of the 'Kentish Yeoman' Inn, at Seal. Subscribers from elsewhere included Thomas Pottinger, a victualler of St Pancras, and the Thomas family of Tregrose, Glamorganshire. Names and professions were traced in PRO's CPR wills database and *Pigot's Directory* (1839).

identifications. The *Kentish Observer*, for instance, preceding a lengthy account of an 1832 Grand Review, commented that surely there was not 'one genuine Man of Kent who will not enter, as we ourselves do, heart and soul, into the narrative'.[183]

4. Petitioning Campaigns

Another area, in which the campaigns surrounding Catholic Emancipation contributed to an expanding political culture, for both men and women, was petitioning campaigns.

Petitioning had long been an established practice in Kent. Petitions from landowners and farmers regarding the state of agriculture and the corn-laws continued in a steady stream throughout the 1815 to 1837 period, and beyond. Several were organised in 1821 to protest over the 'Queen Caroline Affair'. The scale on which petitioning was undertaken in 1828/29, however, was perceived to be, and in all likelihood was, unprecedented. The population of Kent was not unique in being stirred into this kind of activity by the prospect of Catholic Emancipation, but the sheer scale and emotiveness of the responses in the county was remarkable. At the start of March, 1829, *John Bull* claimed that Kent had so far mustered an estimated 81,400 signatures, a figure far larger than that attributed to any other region in England, Wales or Scotland, although still dwarfed by the 641,000 signatures that the journal purported had been received from Dublin. This was just the signatures against Catholic Emancipation and

[183] *Kentish Observer*, 11/10/1832.

therefore excludes the many who were involved in the campaign in favour of it.[184]

In the towns and villages, men and women could be found marching from door to door, with 'Addresses to his Majesty' from almost every imaginable grouping.[185] The voices of the 'Inhabitants of Dover' could be heard alongside the 'Respectable Inhabitants of Maidstone', the 'Householders of Shoreham, Gillingham and Rochester', the 'Non-freeholders of Kent', and the 'Protestant Unitarians of Canterbury and Dover'.[186] As well as the 'Brunswickers' - mainly gentry and tenant farmers - the clergy played a leading role in these campaigns. Many of them had been protesting against Catholic 'claims' for some time, rallying their congregations in opposition to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act.[187] They were apparently unperturbed by the excesses of Penenden Heath, where both Anglicans and dissenters were a 'conspicuous' presence.[188]

In addition to persuading their congregations of the necessity of signing, the clergy, including the Reverent Gleig, distributed tracts and preached the cause from their pulpits.[189] They used their networks to spread the campaign from

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[184] *John Bull,* 1/3/1829; *MGKC,* 3/3/1829.
[185] *MJKA,* 24/3/1829.
[186] *MJKA,* 17/3/1828, 23/3/1829.Among those anti-Catholic petitions listed in John Bull as the 'the cry of the people' were petitions from 'Non-freeholders of Kent', 'Householders of Shoreham', Gillingham, Rochester, Brompton, Deptford, Tunbridge Wells, New Romney, Woodchurch, Downe and Blackheath. Sir Edward Knatchbull presented petitions from Chatham, Shoreham, Brompton, Gillingham, Rochester, Tunbridge Wells again, Eynesford, Cranbrook, Harrietsham, Mereworth, Sutton-at-Hone, Wilmington, Fawkham and Longfield, *John Bull* 1/3/1829, 5/4/1829.
[187] *MJKA,* 17/3/1829. A petition was presented in the Lords in February 1827 against the 'Catholic claims' from the clergy of West Peckham.
[188] Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political,* 203, 216.
[189] *KH,* 19/2/1829; *MJKA,* 10/5/1829

parish to parish, meeting resistance only from those working for the 'other side'. Mr Brockhardt, the Anglican clergyman of Boughton Malherbe, complained in a letter to the *Maidstone Gazette* of a visit he received from a neighbouring clergyman's wife, indicative of the increased opportunities to female participation in supporting roles in these campaigns. The woman arrived at his door with a copy of an address being prepared for the King, 'which I believe has been pretty widely circulated in this part of the county', accompanied with a note in which she says, that she 'had been commissioned by her husband to enquire whether I would undertake the task of obtaining all the signatures to the address which were to be obtained in my parish of Boughton Malherbe, every male inhabitant of the age of eighteen to be allowed the option of signing'. Brockhardt refused, but then was angry to learn that the address and tracts had been left at the house of the overseer for distribution.[190]

The established domain of the public houses remained significant. A Dover petition was launched at a 'spirited' affair in the Guildhall Tavern where 'a large room was crowded to excess' and the petition was soon said to have 'upwards of' 1500 signatures. Meanwhile, the county elite sold tickets for political dinners where 'tremendous cheering' was stirred up for the 'Men of Kent'.[191]

The words spoken in the inns soon were spoken on the streets as lobbyists, going from door to door, gathered signatures. In Maidstone, two 'gentlemen' presented the anti-Catholic Address to one hundred and forty inhabitants

[190] *MGKC,* 31/3/1829

[191] Meeting of the Nobility, Clergy and Gentry in the Bell Inn, Maidstone, accounts in *MJKA,* 3/3/1829, *John Bull,* 3/3/1829; *MGKC,* 3/3/1829.

residing in the High Street, where near 'unanimity' was claimed.[192] The pro-Catholic *Kent Herald,* claimed their opponents' campaign was dependent on regimented organisations in the towns, which were divided into districts for easy canvassing. Paternalistic hierarchies were exploited in the countryside, and horror stories about Catholicism were told in the less respectable alehouses.[193] This apparently motivated only 'labourers, children, paupers' and a category of person so degraded that they could only be referred to as '-!'.[194] Particular scorn was reserved for the 'enlightened' villagers and parsons of Pelham, Waltham and Upper and Lower Hardres.[195]

Whether the public was 'willing' or not, a concerted effort was made to make the anti-Catholic campaign 'popular'. Petitions appealed even to those who could not read them. According to William Cobbett, the 'vulgar' Penenden Heath petition was 'very flashy and showy' with illustrations intended to establish the 'purity, simplicity and sincere piety of the Protestant Church Parson, contested with the corruption, idolatry and profligate hypocrisy of the Papish priest'.[196] It was also far reaching. As elsewhere, small communities that had never petitioned Parliament before were stirred to action.[197] The cause of anti-Catholicism was an emotive one, which stirred men and women of all classes into action.

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[192] *MJKA,* 17/3/1829.
[193] *KH,* 19/2/1829, 12/3/1829.
[194] *KH,* 19/2/1829.
[195] *KH,* 19/2/1829.
[196] Cobbett's *Political Register,* 18/10/1828. For illustrated petitions presented in Cornwall, see *Hansard,* 24/2/1829, New Series, vol. 20, 526.
[197] Colley, *Britons,* 349.

Anti-Catholicism faded relatively quickly in terms of popular political action after the Emancipation Bill was passed. However, the new arena of mass petitioning was soon to be reoccupied by 'Reform' campaigners. Although not exceptional compared to other counties in this respect, petitions flowed again in 1831, from towns and villages, large and small.[198] One can only conjecture about links between the 'unprecedented' political organisation of the Emancipation Crisis, and the outbreak of unrest among the labouring classes, entirely independent of the clergy and gentry's organisation, in the autumn of 1830. Nevertheless, it was Lower Hardres, and the other East Kent villages that reaped the scorn of the *Kent Herald* in 1828, where some of the first significant incidents of machine breaking took place. While the machine breaking and incendiarism of 1830 was not a new phenomenon, this was another moment of political activity in which claims for rights were articulated on an unprecedented scale.

5. Conclusion

The 'public sphere' of Kent was centred upon the 'county community', members of the middling and upper classes who came together for political, social and religious reasons in the 1820s and 1830s. At the core was a group of elite, landed families, who interacted with London society, represented the county on the national scene, and took charge of the internal governance and administration. Nevertheless, many less wealthy individuals and groups interacted from the peripheries of this hub, including the urban middling classes, smaller gentry and tenant farmers, particularly members of farmers'

[198] *Hansard*, 25/3/1831, 18/3/1831, 3rd Series, vol. 3, 932, 1495.

organisations. These institutions became more prevalent and organised during this period. People from a wide spectrum of social backgrounds became involved in petitioning campaigns of 1828 and 1829 on a hitherto unknown scale. Simultaneously, the 'spaces' in which 'public opinion' was formed and contested were reconfigured. As part of this shift, new meanings were attributed to outdoor locations, such as the county meeting ground of Penenden Heath, from which gendered conceptions of the 'county community' could be textually invoked or visualised.

While the Kentish 'public sphere' was masculine dominated, it was not completely homosocial. For women, the opportunities for inclusion had expanded within a limited sphere, particularly because of the increased activity of religious-related associations and the convergence of religion and politics in the campaigns of 1828/29. This period, therefore, saw great progress in the development of these institutions through which 'peripheral' members of the 'county community' became involved in county politics and activities. Finally, the importance of the 'county' as a form of belonging was strongly evoked by the county press, which, in this period, became consciously 'Kentish'.

The 'county' was not the only form of belonging expressed in the expanding 'county community'. Nevertheless, while 'national' issues were on the agenda throughout the period - the fervour surrounding Catholic Emancipation and 'Reform' being superseded with questions of agricultural 'protection' by the mid 1830s, - the prevalent use of county meetings, newspapers and other manifestations of 'county' identity on such occasions emphasised 'Kent' as a

framework through which national politics were negotiated, and through which patriotism was expressed.

Chapter Five: The 'Men of Kent': Political identities in the age of Catholic Emancipation, 'Reform' and 'Swing'

1. Introduction

The intense political activity in Kent between 1828 and 1832 produced a vibrant 'sense of the 'county'' as a form of belonging.[1] This chapter considers how such conceptions of the 'county' were fractured along the lines of class and gender, and how specific forms of 'Kentish' masculinity were performed and embodied in this context.

The precedent-setting campaigns surrounding Catholic Emancipation in 1828 and 1829 were instrumental in establishing the voice of the 'county', and claims to represent it, as important to social and political action. Integral to these new-found meanings was the assertion of the 'Men of Kent' as a regionally specific assertion of masculine 'Englishness': a will to, and maintenance of power. As the Penenden Heath meeting of 1828 illustrates, the men who populated this arena, rich and poor, could be imbued with shared attributes of masculinity: the militaristic prowess of the 'Men of Kent', the defenders of the nation, and their sturdy, independent 'yeoman' qualities. The articulation and embodiment of the 'Men of Kent' by groups and individuals, notably the 'Brunswickers' and the Earl of Winchilsea, provided a glimpse of the performances of masculinity

[1] The use of the phrase 'sense of the county' is inspired by Kathleen Wilson's exploration of the meanings and applications of concepts of the 'people' in provincial society in Wilson, *The Sense of the People.*

necessary to affirm status as a public man in Kent, and to woo the crowd at a large public meeting.[2]

As a language of belonging, that of the 'Men of Kent' was chiefly articulated by the county elite, but the potentially populist undertones tapped into upon Penenden Heath had genuine resonance in popular culture - suggesting that horizontal forms of national belonging could have regionalist rather than all-encompassing 'British' underpinnings. Within certain parameters, the poor could participate in 'county' projects, which in turn influenced their own forms of political action. The first part of this chapter, then, deals with the multiple representations and embodiments of the 'Men of Kent' on Penenden Heath. The second half traces the 'political identity' of the 'Men of Kent', established as a hegemonic notion of 'English' masculinity upon Penenden Heath in 1828, through the era of 'Swing' and 'Reform'. While the stark disunity of 1830 placed the elite identity of the 'Men of Kent' in crisis, and illustrated the liminal position of the poor and landless, 'Reformers' powerfully appropriated the identity for their own in 1831 and 1832. Nevertheless, by 1837, the 'moment' of the 'Men of Kent', with their populist potential, had passed. The 'new' Conservative party, fighting to maintain their dominance in the region, turned to the generic languages of 'Old England' to foster a sense of unity between landowner, tenant and labourer and champion agricultural 'protection'.

[2] For an introduction to the ways in which hegemony is established, maintained and challenged by the performance and use of the body, particularly by repeated of behaviour and gestures, described as 'iterative norms', see Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* 'Introduction'.

2. The 'Brunswickers' and the Penenden Heath Meeting of 1828.

i. The Penenden Heath Meeting.

On the damp morning of October 24th 1828, people from all over Kent, gathered at Penenden Heath, the county meeting place 'from time immemorial', around a mile from the centre of Maidstone. The excitement of the day got underway early, and started for many while they were still on the roads. They travelled from all the major towns of the county: from Rochester, Chatham and Sevenoaks, and from as far as Tunbridge Wells, Canterbury and Dover. Banners, placards and pamphlets were distributed in the wagons, and 'rural bands' accompanied the walkers.[3] The Heath itself was busy by nine o'clock in the morning, and by ten o'clock it was a seething mass of people, the more humble travellers having been joined by a 'large cavalcade of carriages and horses' containing the elite of the county.[4] Like previous county meetings, this was officially a gathering of 'freeholders', but the poor and landless were there in abundance. The socially diverse crowd contained 'wagonners, labourers, and ploughmen' and, on the margins were 'a number of well-dressed ladies'.[5] More dominant in accounts however, was the 'agricultural aspect' of the gathering, with many farmers and rural labourers present, most 'conspicuous' among them being the 'yeomen' farmers.[6] Although estimates on the total number present vary from 20,000 to 100,000, most place the total number of people there at between 30,000 and 60,000.[7] Even if we believe that the lower end of this spectrum may well be closer the actual amount, it was an exceptionally vast public gathering for its time; it was comparable in size only to 'radical' social

[3] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828, *The Times*, 25/10/1828, *Morning Chronicle*, 25/10/ 1828.
[4] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828.
[5] *KG*, 28/10/1828.
[6] Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political*, 203.
[7] *The Times*, 25/10/1828; *MJKA*, 4/11/1828; *Standard*, 27/10/1828.

protests, such as the events in Manchester in 1819 that culminated in the 'Peterloo' massacre.[8]

The meeting itself was conducted along the lines of a political club or society, or even a parliament. A large space of 'about a quarter of a mile' was enclosed by wagons and a variety of other vehicles, and the areas around and within were filled with the densely packed crowds on foot and horseback, the latter being formed in several lines of 'perfect order'.[9] The overall appearance of the gathering was said to have been like that of a 'large amphitheatre'.[10] In the centre was the wagon of the High Sheriff, Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, and on either side of him the vehicles of the two main opposing parties, those for and against the 'Catholic Claims', with the self-proclaimed 'Liberal' elite, situated to the right including the Lords Darnley, Radnor and Teynham, and Thomas Law Hodges. The 'Brunswickers', Winchilsea and Knatchbull at their head, were arrayed to the left. Other attendees included Cobbett and Richard Lalor Shiel, the Irish journalist and lawyer and close associate of Daniel O'Connell, the leader of the Catholic Association whose victory in the Clare election the preceding July had pushed the issue of Catholic Emancipation to the top of the parliamentary agenda.[11] An area was also fenced off for the 'gentlemen of the press', attending from London and the Kentish newspapers: the outcome of the meeting was perceived as an indicator of the nation's feelings about a matter of great import.[12]

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[8] Bentley, *Politics without Democracy*, 20.
[9] *The Times*, 25/10/1828.
[10] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828.
[11] Machin, *The Catholic Question*, 121-2.
[12] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828; *Standard*, 22/10/1828; *Spectator*, 1/11/1828.

At midday, the High Sheriff opened proceedings by declaring the object of the meeting, which was to consider a resolution by Mr. Gipps of the Brunswicker faction, 'to prepare a petition to Parliament, praying that the legislature would adopt such measures as appeared best calculated to support the Protestant establishment of this kingdom in church and state as by law established'.[13] The meeting was then conducted in the manner of a debate, with speakers from the various parties claiming the attention of the audience, or at least that of those near enough to hear, interspersed with numerous disputes over precedence. At dusk, after many lengthy speeches, Mr Gipp's resolution was passed by a show of hands. According to papers with Brunswicker sympathies, such as the *Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser*, *Kentish Gazette*, and *The Standard*, it was done so by a vast, respectable and exultant majority.[14] To more 'liberal' journals, such as *The Times*, *The Morning Chronicle* and the 'radical' *Kent Herald*, the majority was less clear, and was so bolstered by the support of 'disreputable' attendees, as to be highly questionable.[15] An amendment, forwarded by Thomas Law Hodges, that 'whilst (the assembly) sanctions the free right of petitioning, (it) recognises no other authority than that of Parliament, and of the King acting on the advice of responsible Ministers...', was overshadowed by the general 'noise and confusion' that characterised the closing stages of the meeting.[16]

Most accounts agree that the 'Brunswickers' carried the day. Not only did they have the most successful speakers on their side, notably the Earl of Winchilsea

[13] *The Times*, 25/10/1828.
[14] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828, *KG*, 28/10/1828, *The Standard*, 27/10/1828.
[15] *The Times*, 25/10/1828; *The Morning Chronicle*, 25/10/1828; *KH*, 30/10/1828, 6/11/1828.
[16] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828.

who brought proceedings to a climax by crying 'three cheers for PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY', but also much of the crowd, particularly those from rural backgrounds, were said to be behind them.[17] The sheer numbers of farmers and labourers present, and their social status, precluded full participation.[18] According to the *Kentish Gazette*, this did not dampen their enthusiasm: 'Great numbers of the yeomen on horseback, unable to hear what was going forward, assembled on the rising grounds and loudly seconded the cheers which proceeded from the 'Brunswickers''.[19]

The 'popular' nature of the 1828 meeting was branded as 'unconstitutional' by many elite anti-Catholics, as well as their opponents, and caused controversy when the resulting petitions were presented in parliament.[20] According to Lord Clifton, the son of Lord Darnley, the 'Brunswickers'' petitions were said to be those of coerced and drunken 'labourers', 'draymen' and 'dockworkers'. Although women had been present on Penenden Heath, allegations that the petitions were signed by women, which were aimed at documents from elsewhere, were not used against the Kentish 'Brunswickers'. Instead the overtly and threateningly masculine boisterousness of their less respectable supporters was emphasised. The weight of the landowning class was argued to be on the side of the 'pro-Catholics'.[21] Winchilsea and Knatchbull used similar tactics in reply. However, the political situation, with the 'tide' in parliament

[17] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828.
[18] *The Times*, 16/10/1828, *The Spectator*, 18/10/1828.
[19] *KG* 28/10/1828.
[20] The journal *John Bull,* which was staunchly opposed to Emancipation, expressed its concern at the clubs and debates of the 'Brunswickers' despite 'applauding' their principle, *John Bull,* 16/11/1828.
[21] Lord Clifton, Robert Peel, House of Commons, 12/2/1829, *Hansard*, New Series, vol.20, 272-272; *MGKC*, 10/2/1829.

running apparently against them, led them to claim that they represented a great mass of the people in their county and that these people were 'respectable' Englishmen whose views ought to be heard. In this respect, they could claim that the 'tide' was 'in their favour'; they represented both the 'majority' and the newly important 'middling classes'.[22]

These sentiments were not hollow. The 'Brunswickers' success exceeded even their own expectations: an initial meeting of the Brunswick Society was to be held in a room at the Bell Inn, Maidstone, but so many people turned up to show their 'determination to uphold the principles which placed the House of Brunswick on the British Throne', that the meeting had to be adjourned to the town hall.[23] A celebratory dinner to be held on the evening of Penenden Heath also had to be postponed, through fear of the respectable Brunwickers being swamped.[24]

ii. The 'Brunswickers' Men of Kent'

The anti-Catholic cause was indeed a popular one. According to Linda Colley, the protests of 1828 and 1829 tapped into elements of folklore, and oral traditions of anti-Catholicism, which illustrated the importance of Protestantism in ordinary 'Britons'' worldviews.[25] Nevertheless, the 'world views' which the 'Brunswickers' cultivated, and the forms of belonging to which they appealed, cannot be interpreted within the realms of 'umbrella Britishness'. The

[22] Sir Edward Knatchbull, House of Commons, 12/2/1829. *Hansard*, New Series, vol.20, 272-272; Lord Winchilsea, House of Lords, *Hansard*, New Series, vol.20, 299-301; *MJKA*, 17/2/1829.
[23] *MGKC*, 23/9/1828.
[24] *MJKA*, 4/11/1828.
[25] Colley, *Britons*, 351.

'Brunswickers' appealed to a wide following through the language and symbolism of the 'Men of Kent'.

Their success and, their 'Kentish' focus, was at least partially dependent upon the industry and vision of a core group of landowners, who rose to power in this period. Of particular importance was the charismatic leadership of the Earl of Winchilsea, who was catapulted into the centre of the political arena on inheriting his titles from his uncle in 1826, and then by his energetic zeal for the 'Protestant Constitution'.[26] There is little doubt that Winchilsea *liked* the legends and militaristic trappings associated with the representations of the 'Men of Kent' in histories and literature, a passion he may well have inherited from his father. Both had been members of the yeomanry, his father serving with the West Kent militia in Ireland in 1798, and Freemasons.[27] Both transferred the languages of these homosocial associations – which included the celebration of the 'Men of Kent' into the political arena. The Finch-Hattons, senior and junior, had been among the few Kentish landowners to assert themselves as 'Men of Kent' at county meetings and elections in the early 1820s, arguing that being a 'man of Kent' was about loyalty to church and King, and residence in the county.[28]

It was also about being defenders of the nation. Winchilsea drew on the legends of the 'Men of Kent' to justify their resistance to Catholic Emancipation. As he stated in his lengthy spiel upon Penenden Heath, Kent 'was the last to surrender its

[26] For more biographical details, see ch. 7.2.
[27] J. Bonhote, *Historical Records of the West Kent Militia* (London: 1909), 186; CKS-Q/R/Sm/2/1-7. Lists of Kent Freemasons, 1799-1839.
[28] *MJKA*, 21/3/1820; *MJKA*, 27/6/1826.

liberty to a foreign monarch' and so it would be 'the first to support the Protestant Constitution which is inseparably united with civil and religious liberty'.[29] He was not alone in this usage. All kinds of Brunswicker propaganda, from the speeches of the elite to songs, posters and handbills, drew upon the legends of the 'Men of Kent' and relied upon knowledge of their 'unconquered' legacy and their relative superiority to other races and even other 'Englishmen'.[30] A special version of *The Man of Kent* was circulated in Maidstone to be sung by the 'Brunswickers' and their followers. Allegedly performed by ballad singers on the streets, it makes a direct link between the resistance of the 'Men of Kent' to 'Norman William', and their defiance of O'Connell's 'treacherous' rebels in the present.[31]

The 'Brunswickers' thus framed their actions in the heroic narratives of the 'Men of Kent' in the past.[32] Private correspondence, particularly amongst Winchilsea and his circle, spoke of the duties of being a 'Man of Kent' at this perceived moment of national crisis.[33] At a meeting of the Brunswick Society in October 1828, for instance, Sir John Wells, then M.P. for Maidstone, announced to the present dignitaries that as a 'Man of Kent' he was prepared to fight on

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[29] Speech of the Earl of Winchilsea, Penenden Heath, 24/10/1828, *MJKA*, 28/10/1828. Similar accounts of this speech can be found in the *Morning Chronicle,* 25/10/1828, *John Bull,* 26/10/1828 and *The Times,* 25/10/1828.

[30] See Figure 1. Poster: 'To the Men of Kent, EKA Sa/ZP2.

[31] *The Times,* 24/10/1828.

[32] I am drawing here on Graham Dawson's idea that the 'Masternarrative of Britishness...are constituted by numerous micronarratives about the nation's Great Men'. In the nineteenth century, newspaper reports, and adventure stories, of imperial 'soldier heroes' placed the actions of the individuals or their group as 'micro-narratives' within the ongoing heroic 'master-narratives'. This is also discernable amongst the 'Brunswickers' Men of Kent', Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 13.

[33] Correspondence of the Earl of Winchilsea, 1/9/1828 - 5/11/1829, FH 5672-5722.

behalf of the Protestant Constitution until he was 'up to his knees in blood'.[34] Meanwhile, Sir John Brydges told the company, which consisted principally of large landowners, that they were the 'loyal, and brave, and free' yeomanry of this highly respectable county, whose motto is 'Invicta'...who 'must not only profess their loyalty in the hour of danger, but...be prepared to show it by their devotion...steel...and at the hazard of their lives'.[35] They were received by the company, which included Knatchbull and Winchilsea, with loud cheers and applause. The meeting was reported upon extensively in both the county and the metropolitan press. The latter, particularly those with pro-Catholic leanings such as *The Times*, were 'thunderously' amused by the elderly Wells' absurd proclamation. Fun was made of 'John Wells of the bloody knees' for months to come.[36] The 'Brunswickers' were also attacked in Kent, although only by minority 'radical' voices, who themselves drew heavily on the rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' and their unconquered legacy, a language with which people in Kent would become increasingly familiar.

iii. The 'Men of Kent', Cobbett and 'Popular' Masculinities

The 'Brunswickers' utilisation of 'Kentish' identities transferred remarkably easily from their initial meeting in Maidstone town hall to the much wider arena of Penenden Heath where it transcended the barriers of class. Using regional symbols, such as the Kent Invicta and the 'Men of Kent's' 'oaken sprie', which referred to the legend of the 'Men of Kent' ambushing the Normans at the time of the conquest, they integrated their cause with that of a regional identity that apparently had its roots in the mists of time. Thousands of attendees happily

[34] *MGKC,* 23/9/1828.
[35] *MJKA,* 23/9/1828.
[36] *The Times,* 18/9/1828, 19/9/1828, 29/9/1828, 2/10/1828, 22/10/1828, 30/10/1828.

participated. A sense of unity between 'masters' and 'men', was bolstered considerably by their shared drinking culture: the ale flowed freely on Penenden Heath.[37]

Winchilsea himself provided a linchpin for the 'Brunswickers'' popular appeal, embodying the roles of 'soldier hero' of the Protestant Constitution and iconic 'Man of Kent'. Indeed, the potency of Winchilsea's masculinity owed much to his physical appearance. Over six foot tall, he was sturdily built, and did not look like he would break should he wield a sword or push a plough, although in reality he did neither.[38] He was able to combine to nigh perfection the 'Men of Kent' rhetoric with stirring performances, backed up by his imposing and 'manly' appearance. Richard Lalor Shiel penned an illuminating portrait of Winchilsea in action:

> He is a tall, strong built, vigorous-looking man, destitute of all dignity or grace, but with a bluff, rude, and direct nautical bearing, which reminds you of the quarter-deck, and would lead you to suppose that he was the mate of a ship... Before the chair was taken he was actively engaged in marshalling his troops, and cheering them on to battle, and it was manifest that he felt all the excitement of a leader engaged in a cause....[39]

Shiel recalled a similar thickset nature in the Earl's support group: even the relatively slightly built Sir Edward Knatchbull had the air of an archetypal 'John Bull'.[40] Such leaders harmonised easily with the stereotypical rural ignoramuses that he perceived making up the 'mob' that followed them, their faces as 'vacant'

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[37] *The Times*, 25/10/1828.
[38] See Figure 5, Print by H.B. (1830) depicting Lord Winchilsea, holding a firebrand, beckoning on the 'Ultra-Tories', British Museum catalogue reference 16302.
[39] Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political*, 202.
[40] Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political*, 214.

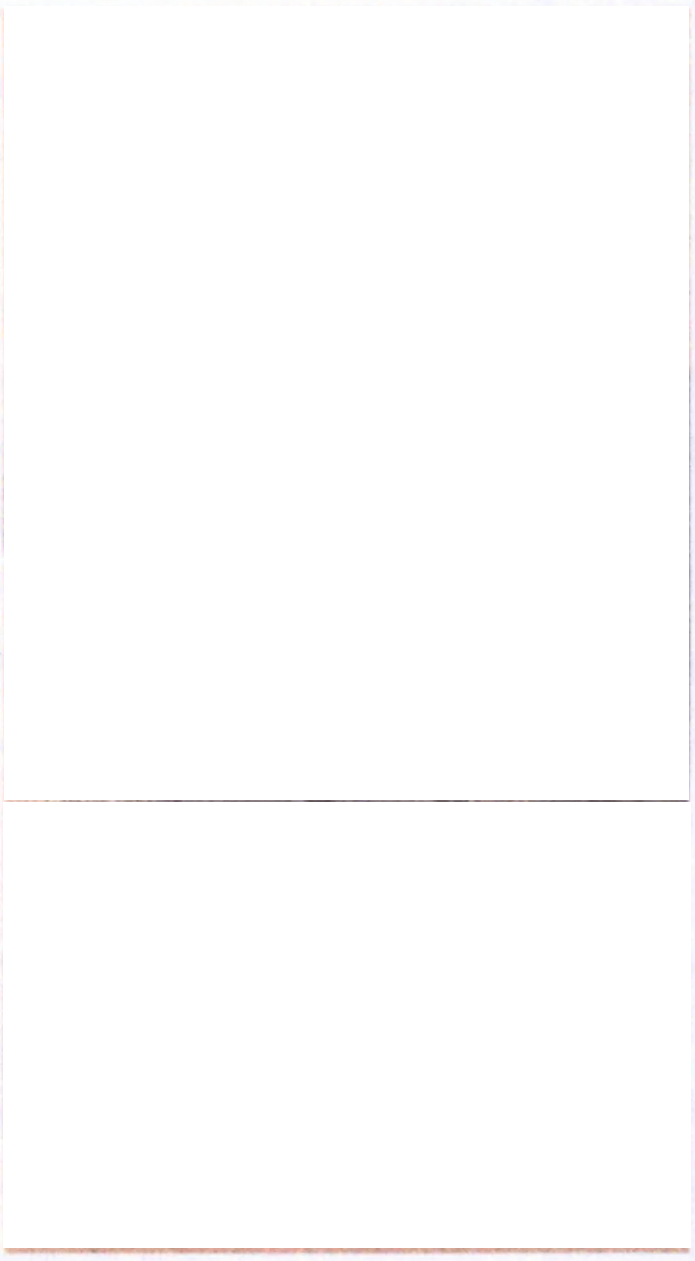

Figure 5. 'Guy Fawkes or the Anniversary of the Popish Plot'. Tinted print engraved by H.B, (November 1830) depicting Lord Winchilsea, holding a firebrand, beckoning on the 'Ultra-Tories,' . British Museum Catalogue Reference, 16302. Note the tight and immodest cut of his trousers, compared to the more staid and loose-trousered gentleman just out of the frame.

as 'cattle'.[41] Beneath the obvious satire, Shiel identified Winchilsea's pretensions as a quasi-military popular leader. If Winchilsea was consciously mimicking Britain's military heroes, he adopted the lauded approach of Admiral Nelson rather than the politically besieged Duke of Wellington. He was not afraid to lead from the front, and beckon his men onwards, earning him a reputation as a 'firebrand'.[42] Other detractors, without Shiel's loyalties, compared him to his contemporary and erstwhile nemesis, Daniel O'Connell, well known for his theatrical speeches and ability to rally the crowds at the monster meetings of the Catholic Association.[43]

Placing himself at the head of an 'army' of 'yeomen', Winchilsea's 'manliness' found an unlikely admirer in William Cobbett. Ian Dyck has argued that Cobbett's conception of 'Englishness', served, to an extent, as a mouthpiece for 'rural popular culture'. It was certainly a distinctive one.[44] The virtues of working the land, 'yeoman virtues', were central. He eulogised the poor countrymen's 'hardness' and bravery, compared to the 'soft' masses of the manufacturing cities in the north.[45] His dislike for the spendthrift aristocracy, and of gentrified farmers who rode to hounds but never worked the land, and his defence of 'manly' rural sports against the moralistic onslaught of evangelicals, is equally well-documented.[46] Cobbett's extensive writing on conduct also describes the qualities he valued most in men: the ability to act in a straight

[41] Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political*, 194.
[42] For Nelson's 'from the front' leadership style, see Andrew Lambert, *Nelson. Britannia's God of War* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005). For Winchilsea as a 'firebrand' see Figure 5.
[43] Lord Darnley, 13/2/1829, House of Lords, *Hansard*, New Series, vol.20, 299, 306-307, 316; *The Times*, 19/9/1828, 21/10/1828; *London Magazine*, quoted in *KH*, 9/10/1828.
[44] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*, 47.
[45] *CPR*, 20/2/1830.
[46] Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*, 21-23, 62; John Stevenson, 'William Cobbett: Patriot or Briton?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Ser., vol. 6. (1996), 133.

forward manner, and eschew any hints of effeminacy. As he stated in his *Advice to A Youth*, 'In your manners be neither boorish nor blunt, but, even these are preferable to simpering and crawling'.[47] It is evident that Cobbett saw Winchilsea, and his following of 'Men of Kent', as embodying these qualities.

On the eve of the Penenden Heath meeting, William Cobbett travelled into Kent. He had plans for a multifaceted campaign that would capitalise on the influx of politically interested people in Maidstone occasioned by the county gathering. Above all, he hoped to draw the attention of local agriculturists to the real problems that he believed faced the 'Men of Kent' and their Irish counterparts: tithes and the church system. His intention was to speak at the meeting, to make sure that the farmers and labourers present did not become unduly influenced by either of the high-class factions.[48] In anticipation, he had prepared a petition 'from the people, praying for the abolition of tithes, and some sweeping measure of ecclesiastical reform'.[49] He also intended to take the opportunity to show a specimen of Indian Corn to the farmers of the county, and explain how its cultivation could be of benefit to them.[50]

As was typical, Cobbett worked tirelessly to spread his messages, with an industry that equalled that of the 'Brunswickers'. He 'sowed' copies of his pamphlet, '*Facts for the Men of Kent*', all along the road from Deptford to Rochester, and then from Rochester to Maidstone.[51] Ten thousand further copies met him on his arrival there, half of which he immediately circulated around the

[47] Cobbett, 'Advice to a Youth', point 37, in *Advice to Young Men.*
[48] *CPR*, vol. 66, no.17, 25/10/1828.
[49] Hodges, *A Report of the Speeches* (1828), 30.
[50] *MJKA*, 28/10/1828.
[51] William Cobbett, *Facts for the Men of Kent*, 1828. BL.

market town, which was buzzing with activity. The other five thousand he sent on for distribution in the Tunbridge direction.[52] In it, he entreated the 'Men of Kent', to 'vote for themselves', on Penenden Heath: '...be not their tools: you never were, and I trust that you will now maintain your character for good sense and public spirit'.[53] However, although Cobbett never wavered from his commitment to his own agenda, his experiences on Penenden Heath appear to have propelled him further towards, if not the cause of the 'Brunswickers', the almost irresistible power of their conceptualisations of the 'Men of Kent', which it seems were not so far from his own ideals of what it was to be 'English' and 'manly'. Particularly when Darnley, Teynham and the 'liberal' press of London loaded Winchilsea and his rural following with accusations of 'bigotry' and claimed that ignorant country people knew nothing of politics, Cobbett stepped rather unexpectedly to their defence.[54]

Cobbett was clear who was *not* worthy of the noble title of the 'Men of Kent'. Situated on the day near the wagons of the 'liberal party', he was disgusted by their arguments, and by their behaviour and conduct. His hostility to the aristocracy was well known and he applied it with full force to Lord Darnley, who he dismissed as a fop, weak and ineffectual.[55] However, he reserved his most violent verbal assault for 'Irishman', Richard Lalor Shiel. In strongly 'racialised' language, he graphically described how the lawyer used 'wild' gesticulations and foamed at the mouth in a revolting, animalistic manner. Shiel, contended Cobbett, did 'as much mischief as it was possible for a man to do in

[52] *CPR*, 1/11/1828.
[53] Cobbett, *Facts for the Men of Kent*.
[54] This was the line predominantly taken in *The Times, The Spectator, The Morning Chronicle* and other examples of the 'liberal' and 'radical' press.
[55] *CPR*, 8/11/1828.

so short a space of time to the character of his own country, and to the cause of his religion'. He also uncritically related how the Penenden Heath crowd shouted out a series of degrading appellations to the visiting speaker, calling him: 'mounteback, posture-master, wild Irishman, monkey'. 'There, now', cried one enthusiastic spectator, 'he'll bite somebody'.[56]

In contrast, Cobbett's account of Winchilsea was barely concealed praise. He reported that his manner was 'bold and frank and even able', 'his person tall and stout, his voice good, his manner unaffected'.[57] Winchilsea, he claimed, had the demeanour of a military leader, comparable with the 'greatest captain of the age'. 'I perceived nothing unfair on the part of Lord Winchilsea or any of this people', wrote the famous radical. 'They triumphed as fairly as any men ever triumphed in the world'.[58] Moreover, he was very taken by the appearance of Winchilsea's following of 'yeomen', rendered 'conspicuous' by their 'sturdy appearance', and by their waving the symbolic 'oaken boughs'.[59] The 'yeomen's' appearance also struck several other account writers, and even the reporter from *The Times* saw the 'yeomen', brandishing their oaken boughs, as impressively 'imposing'.[60] When the actions of the 'Men of Kent' at the Penenden Heath meeting were roundly condemned in the metropolitan press as those of country yokels and mindless bigots, Cobbett wrote in their defence to the *Morning Herald*:

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[56]All quotes are from a letter by William Cobbett to the editor of *The Morning Chronicle.* Reprinted in *MJKA,* 11/11/1828.
[57] *CPR,* 25/10/1828.
[58]Letter to editor of the *Morning Chronicle,* reprinted in *MJKA,* 11/11/1828.
[59]*MJKA,* 4/11/1828.
[60]*The Times,* 25/10/1828.

> NOW, SIR, THIS MEETING PRESENTED TO MY EYES THE FINEST, THE GRANDEST, THE NOBLEST SIGHT THAT THESE EYES EVER BEHELD. THERE WERE NOT LESS THAN 2000 MEN ON HORSEBACK, more than a hundred post-chaises, and other carriages of that description. The meeting was held on a beautiful smooth piece of green sward, on the side of a very gently rising hill...there was not, during the whole time, a single broil...or a single act of violence. IT WAS AN HONOUR TO THE COUNTY AND AN HONOUR TO THE COUNTRY.[61] (Cobbett's capitals)

The actions and appearance of Winchilsea and the 'Brunswickers' had, even if just for a short while, won William Cobbett over. Cobbett shared with them visions of agrarian and militaristic masculinity which, envisaged as the 'Men of Kent' on Penenden Heath, embodied the finest qualities of an Englishman. Winchilsea's iconic 'Man of Kent' also captured the hearts of many others. As his speech drew to a conclusion 'ten thousand hats...waved in the air' and there was 'loud and long continued cheering'.[62] According to the *Maidstone Journal*, the 'Men of Kent' then bore off their champion in triumph.[63]

iv. 'Radical Men of Kent'?

Even at their apogee upon Penenden Heath, under the favourable circumstances of a Brunswicker majority gathered on a bright autumn morning in the Kentish countryside, the 'Brunswickers'' 'Men of Kent' were far from uncontested. Print culture was influential in the formulation of regional identities and, accordingly, the Kentish press played an important role in challenging and transforming regionally specific masculinities and unlocking their 'radical' potential.[64] Indeed, the Penenden Heath meeting stimulated debates in the

[61] Letter to editor of the *Morning Chronicle,* reprinted in *MJKA,* 11/11/1828.
[62] *MJKA,* 28/10/1828.
[63] *MJKA,* 1/11/1828.
[64] Wilson, *The Island Race*, 33

Kentish press about the identity of the 'Men of Kent' that smouldered on for the next decade.

In 1828, the majority of the county newspapers (*KG, MJKA, MGKC*) wielded the rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' in support of the 'Church, King and Constitution', principles broadly comparable to the Tory Kentish elite. On the other hand, John Chalk Claris, editor of the *Kent Herald*, took his cue from the 'Brunswickers' to mobilise the more 'radical' potential of the 'Men of Kent'.[65]

Claris (c.1796-1866) was a poet and writer, the son of a Canterbury bookseller and publisher himself, and came from a wealthy enough background for him to be sent to the prestigious King's School in Canterbury.[66] Between the years 1816 and 1822 he produced several volumes of verse, published under the name of Arthur Brook. A disciple of 'romanticism', Claris was heavily influenced by the styles of Wordsworth, Byron and particularly Shelley. [67] His works gained the attention of national periodicals, particularly his *Elegy on the Death of Shelley.*[68]

Claris was deeply inspired by Shelley's burning sense of social injustice, which had displayed a 'penetrating understanding of economic and social issues', such as the Peterloo massacre of 1819. However, Shelley did most of his work from

[65] The fading *Kentish Chronicle* also took a pro-Emancipation stance.
[66] Alfred Winnifrith, *Men of Kent and Kentish Men. Biographical notices of 680 worthies of Kent* (Folkestone: F. J. Parsons, 1913), 123-4; Donald H. Reiman, 'Introduction' to *Thoughts and Feelings; and, Retrospection ; and, Elegy on the death of Shelley by John Chalk Claris,* (London: Garland, 1977).
[67] Important strands in Shelley's 'romanticism' included a glorification of the 'people', their national histories and their heroes. For further discussions, see Cian Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[68] Reiman, *Introduction to Thoughts and Feelings.*

the safe distance of the Mediterranean. His 'radicalism' was a deeply 'romantic' one, marked by a 'missionary zeal', rather than life at the front-line of the English 'radical' movement.[69] This passion, yet distance, is discernible in Claris' writings. According to Donald H. Reiman, Claris, like Shelley, really believed '...when his feelings and ideas and the way of the world collided, the world – not he - was wrong'.[70] Like Shelley, a burning sense of injustice, empowered this 'isolated, pain-ridden, rebellious poet' to 'battle against political injustice and religious bigotry'.[71] The qualities that Claris admired are communicated in his *Elegy*. Claris' hero was the inspirational 'champion for man's suffering kind', striving to 'crush tyrants' until 'Love be Law, and Gentleness be Power'.[72]

On no ground did Claris fight harder for his beliefs than as editor and writer of the *Herald*, where he was employed from 1826.[73] From his arrival, the *Herald* was increasingly aimed at the urban artisans of Maidstone and Canterbury and appears to have gained a wide readership among the rural and urban middling and working classes.[74] Prior to the Penenden Heath meeting, Claris countered the formidable Brunswicker propaganda machine with his own vision of the 'Men of Kent': the 'self-acting, intelligent and un-purchasable men from the middle classes...'.[75] Independence and intelligence, not the physical power needed to fight or work the land, were premium. Claris championed his

[69] Stephen C. Behrendt, *Shelley and his Audiences* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 3, 202.
[70] Reiman, *Introduction to Thoughts and Feelings,* vii.
[71] Ibid.
[72] John Chalk Claris, 'Elegy on the death of Shelley'.
[73] Obituary of John Chalk Claris, *KH,* 11/1/1866.
[74] See ch. 4.2.v.
[75] *KH,* 6/11/1828.

readers' abilities to 'think for themselves' as the characteristic which defined them as 'true Men of Kent'. Never, they declared, could the pamphleteering of the 'No Popery' crowd lead the 'middle and lower classes' into a 'spirit of bigotry', which 'good sense and charitable feeling have extinguished, we trust, forever in this country'.[76] The 'country bumpkins' may have been easily led, but the intelligent town-dwellers were not: 'Certain 'Brunswickers' may as well refrain from attempting to intimidate their Tradesmen in Canterbury – it may do in their villages, but not in the Towns of Kent'.[77]

Nevertheless, they were still 'Men of Kent', drawing upon their unique myths and legends. Claris's poetry, which routinely blessed the columns of the *Herald*, became a particularly powerful vehicle for this: the Men of Kent, he claimed, were the 'first to rise – the last to shrink, From reformation!'[78] On the eve of Penenden Heath, he proclaimed in a characteristic echo of Shelley:

Rise ye freeborn men of Kent
Ye whom Conqueror never bent,
This conspiracy resent
'Gainst your liberty.[79]

Predictably, Claris was bitterly disappointed by the actual turn of events on Penenden Heath. When no heroic army met the Brunswicker challenge, his dismay poured out in verse:

Down, down in the dust, for your glory is gone,
And the pride of your forefathers rests in their graves,

[76] *KH*, 9/10/1828.
[77] *KH*, 9/10/1828, 23/10/1828, 6/11/1828.
[78] *KH*, 23/10/1828.
[79] *KH*, 23/10/1828.

Well may W --- boast of the wreath he had won,
Yet he – even he – must despise ye as slaves![80]

Claris's 'Men of Kent' had not so much been emasculated by their defeat at the hands of the Brunswicker 'bigots', but by their failure to manifest themselves on Penenden Heath at all! Despite its popular potential, Claris' essentially urban and middle-class vision of the 'Men of Kent' would have to wait for its 'moment' of embodiment.

3. The 'Men of Kent' after Penenden Heath

i. 'Swing'

The 'Men of Kent' and the tradition-making moment of the Penenden Heath meeting combined with other influences, including the French Revolution of 1830, to create the symbols and vocabulary of popular politics in the next few tumultuous years.[81] Notably, the platform of Penenden Heath gave status to those who spoke from it, even the labouring poor. In December 1830, around five hundred labourers and mechanics gathered there. They called for 'Reform in the People's house of Parliament and vote by ballot' for 'all men 21 years of age'. Stephen Crawte, a labourer and publican's son, spoke to the crowd while a wealthy local farmer subscribed seven shillings for ale to be offered all-round. Despite rumours that troops were on their way, the meeting eventually split up without major trouble. While labourers and artisans protested en masse on numerous occasions during 'Swing', the high Tory *Kent Gazette* at least acknowledged that this occasion was a 'county', or Penenden Heath meeting,

[80] *KH* 30/10/1830.
[81] Hobsbawn and Rudé suggest both the elite meetings and petitions about agricultural distress, and the influence of news from France, may have stimulated the outbreak of riots in Kent, *Captain Swing*, 66.

rather than merely another riot, and reported the proceedings accordingly, noting approvingly that Crawte's most extreme suggestion, attacking the clergy, was treated with disdain by the majority of the onlookers.[82]

The 'rural popular culture', tapped into by the 'Brunswickers' on Penenden Heath, also came to the fore in 1830. The quasi-militaristic organization of the 'Swing' riots echoed those of elite county culture as well as plebeian traditions of protest. Besides the obvious connotations of Swing being a Captain, there are many examples of groups parading through villages following banners, as the 'Brunswickers' had done on such a prestigious scale, two years previously.[83] In one act of 'insurrection' near Maidstone, the labourers, having set fire to a haystack, 'paraded through the village, flying a black flag'.[84]

While such shows of militarism were not specific to Kent, a small sample of the surviving London 'radical' propaganda spoke to and of the Kent protestors as 'Men of Kent' and one letter even warned of a 'Kentish' army marching on London, shadowing the challenges of Watt Tyler and Jack Cade.[85] 'Yeomen virtues' and 'Old England' also had much resonance with the protesters. According to Peter Jones, plebeian ballads displayed the 'visions of the people' which underpinned 'Swing'.[86] At the heart of these were calls for a 'return' to the societal norms of 'olden times', before the 'yeoman' was made landless, and

[82] *KH,* 4/11/1830; *KG,* 5/11/1830.
[83] *The Times,* 25/10/1828, *MJKA,* 4/11/1828, *The Standard,* 27/10/1828.
[84] *KH,* 28/10/1830. Militaristic trappings were also detectable in the organisation of rioters following Sir William Courtenay at the Battle of Bossenden Wood in 1837. Courtenay and his followers armed themselves with bludgeons and flew a banner with Courtenay's emblem in their desperate last stand against the soldiers, Reay, *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers;* Rogers, *Battle in Bossenden Wood,* 134-137.
[85] HO40 25/65-58; HO44 23/227. Peter Jones has commented on the use of military techniques in Hampshire, Norfolk and Kent, 'Captain Swing and Rural Popular Culture', 36.
[86] Jones, 'Captain Swing and Rural Popular Culture', 59.

in which farmers and landlords accepted their responsibilities.[87] Land, then, was an essential element in many of these discourses, although the unconquered legacy of the 'Men of Kent' also had some resonance with the poorer people of Kent. Protesting on a rather different issue, the monopoly on Queensborough fisheries by the town corporation, fishermen Edward Skey rallied his poverty stricken followers by drawing on the heroic record of their Kentish forebears in crushing the power of 'imperious tyrants'.[88]

That the rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' was *not* more powerfully utilised in 1830, may be attributable to their lack of a champion among the middling classes of the 'county community'. With the *Kent Herald* read by the poorer classes of Kent, John Clark Claris would have been the most likely candidate. Nevertheless, his 'radicalism' had stark limits. While Claris praised 'gallantry and patriotism', his writings made a fine distinction between the utopian and 'romantic', and the desperate and banal. Incendiarism and machine breaking simply did not fit Claris' 'romantic' idea of an 'heroic' uprising of the 'people', which was better captured by the French Revolution of 1830. This was a moment for soaring prose as 'the population of Paris rose unanimously to assert their rights, and with one heroic determination animating every class, the rich, the poor, the women, and the very children, rushed against the murderous steel of the soldiery – fought, bled and conquered'.[89] Nevertheless, even the French crossed Claris' line between heroism and destruction when the printers broke their new machinery. Their glory was now 'sullied'; rather than another

[87] Jones and Dyck both discussed the limitations of evidence. Jones, 'Captain Swing and Rural Popular Culture', 99, 143; Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*, 161-163.
[88] *KH*, 8/1/1829.
[89] *KH*, 11/8/1830.

outbursting of emotion and justice, he saw this as resistance to 'intellectual improvement'.[90]

Claris found little to admire in desperation and starvation, or in the destruction of homes and livestock, when experienced close to home in the autumn of 1830. He did not even communicate in the *Herald* the sense of excitement evoked by Robert Cowton in his memoir, which recalled a young man revelling in a Canterbury on tenterhooks: 'Scarcely a night passed without the citizens of Canterbury being startled by messengers riding into the place at full speed...I have gone up after dark to the Mount of the Dane John, for several nights in succession, and have seen three and four, and sometimes five, farms blazing away at one time...'.[91] Claris saw no political motive in these displays, just ignorance and desperation: 'rash and misguided men...such wanton destruction of property can never benefit them, nor mitigate any of the miseries they complain of'.[92] Thus, the legends and identity of the 'Men of Kent' never underpinned the actions of the 'Swing' protesters on the pages of the *Kent Herald.* This was *still* not the 'moment' of Claris's 'Men of Kent'.

On the other hand, 'Swing' placed the elite political identity of the 'Men of Kent' in crisis. In the face of nightly violence and incendiarism, many of the most prominent 'Men of Kent' who had found glory on Penenden Heath were left looking very vulnerable indeed: far from 'unconquered'. As the *Morning Chronicle* had predicted in October 1828, 'in disturbed times, the man who

[90] *KH*, 16/9/1830.
[91] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 53.
[92] *KH*, quoted in *MJKA*, 12/10/1830.

shouted 'No Popery' on Penenden Heath would be worth nothing'.[93] Although none of the gentry or aristocracy were actually injured, letters threatened landowners and their families, and many prominent members of the 'county community' were forced to give money by protestors, sometimes gathered in their hundreds.[94] Sir John Filmer, for example, was compelled to give two shillings after he was 'hemmed in' by a 'mob' outside his home at East Sutton Park.[95] Winchilsea, meanwhile, overtook a group of at least two hundred and fifty as he rode across Lenham Heath, who demanded wages of two shillings and sixpence a day. Winchilsea apparently vowed to 'do what he could' for them in London, but distributed over nine pounds from his own pocket in order to appease them.[96] While the *Maidstone Gazette* commented on Winchilsea's benevolence and dignity, the image of the dignified leaders and loyal rank-and-file of the 'Men of Kent' was severely undermined. As the *Maidstone Gazette* lamented: 'the 'Men of Kent' have in former times obtained a name for loyalty and obedience, which we should be sorry to see...sullied away in the formidable insubordination of the present day'.[97] At a meeting of magistrates and farmers at the Corn and Hop Exchange in Canterbury, Lord Teynham stated that: 'it was not the character of Englishmen to be incendiaries, nor of the Men of Kent to do things in the dark'.[98] Famously, 'outsiders' were blamed for the riots. Landowner Henry Tylden argued that the riots were not a rising of the 'distressed

[93] *Morning Chronicle* 26/10/1828.
[94] Actual bodily violence was primarily aimed against Irish labourers and overseers, *KH* 11/11/1828. See also ch. 6.2.iii.
[95] HO 52/10. See also Hobsawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, 76-79.
[96] *MGKC*, 2/11/1830. Meanwhile, Thomas Law Hodges had several run-ins with protesting labourers. During his rent audit at the Bull Inn, Bennenden, a mob forced their way 'into the dinner room'. In what appears to have been a violent confrontation, the intruders attempted to extinguish the lights, and an attachment of the 5th dragoon guards was required to allay the incident, *KH*, 18/11/1830.
[97] *MGKC*, 5/10/1830.
[98] *MGKC*, 9/11/1830.

peasantry' but the work of foreign 'banditti' who, in inducing the labourers to commit capital crimes, were 'murderers' rather than 'suicides'.[99]

When labouring men raised their voices independently in such a way, then, it led to their explicit exclusion from newly emerging visions of the 'county'. This was starkly demonstrated at the end of December 1830. Penenden Heath was the scene of execution for nearly the final time, when three labourers, Henry and William Packman, aged eighteen and twenty, and John Dycke, aged thirty, were hanged there for incendiarism, in front of a large and partially sympathetic crowd.[100] The unified moment of the 'Men of Kent' on Penenden Heath was thus a fragile one.

ii. A Martial and Agricultural Language of Masculinity

Despite the challenges of 1830, the 'Men of Kent' recovered as a 'political identity'. Its main currency was amongst the middling and upper classes of the Kent 'county community'.

In the years between 1828 and 1832, representations of the Men of Kent in speeches and the press rarely needed to be too explicit, particularly when woven into accounts of contemporary politics and events. Enemies, who could range from the Catholic Irish or French, to pro free-trade Brummagems or ministers at Westminster, were to be 'scattered' and 'defeated'.[101] Champions of political causes were 'faithful soldiers', engaged in a 'fight for the cause' and who would

[99] Henry Tylden to Sir Edward Knatchbull, November 1830, U951 C14/9. The 'Othering' of the Captain Swing rioters is discussed in more detail in ch. 6.2.ii.
[100] *KH*, 30/12/1830. See ch. 4.2.v.
[101] *KG*, 24/10/1828.

'contest every inch of ground'.[102] References to the recent Napoleonic wars were now a particularly appropriate response to moments of perceived threat to national prosperity, such as Catholic Emancipation and any repeal of agricultural 'protection'.[103] Such allusions had deep emotional impact. Nelson's famous rallying cry was a particular favourite for the close of stirring editorials or speeches: 'England Expects Every Man Will Do His Duty'.[104] Visitors to Kent quickly learnt that this was the language in which you addressed a crowd in the county, even if just for the purposes of flattery. Daniel O'Connell, on a visit to 'radicals' in Rochester in 1836 to popularise the cause of repeal, appealed to the 'Men of Kent', with his usual skill, as 'distinguished in English history' and pleaded that his voice be heard in 'every part of their beautiful county'.[105]

Kent newspapers rarely needed to be too explicit about the legacies of the 'Men of Kent'. They were constantly hinted at with allusions to, for example 'undaunted spirits' and the 'unconquered' legacy, bolstered by the liberal use of their motto, 'Invicta'.[106] The symbol of the Kent Invicta itself was actually printed next to the *Maidstone Gazette*'s editorial when printing techniques improved in the early 1830's. The use of the narratives and rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' in the Kentish press in this period was a form of 'banal nationalism'; a

[102] *MGKC*, 17/2/1829, 10/3/1829.
[103] *MJKA*, 1/9/1829.
[104] *MGKC*, 10/2/1829. For another example of the use of this phrase, in a completely different context, see *A Short Address to the Farmers of Kent On the Present State of the Agricultural Labourers, by a Kentish Farmer* (Canterbury: Henry Ward, 1830), CKS U120 218-20; see also *Thomas Rider's Election Advertisement, MGKC,* 3 /5/1831*; MGKC* 19/10/1828, 24/5/1831.
[105] *MGKC*, 19/7/1836. Disraeli used a similar language in his Maidstone election campaign of 1836, partially to counteract the attacks on his 'Jewishness' levied by his opponents, Disraeli to Mary Wyndham Lewis 29/7/1837 in J. A. W. Gunn, John Matthews, Donald M. Schurman, and M. G. Wiebe, eds., *Benjamin Disraeli Letters Volume Two: 1835–1837* (University of Toronto Press, 1982), letter 631, 277.
[106] *KG,* 24/10/1828.

notion of regional identity 'deeply embedded' in the way its producers and readers interpreted the world around them.[107] Similarly, the 'Invicta', constantly name-dropped and printed, took on the significance of an 'unwaved flag': a symbol, charged with meaning, but which is seen in many contexts, not all of which were explicitly to do with its 'agenda'.[108] In this way, the constant hinting and flagging of the 'Men of Kent' paved a constant, sometimes unreflective, backdrop to the lives of the writers and the readers of the Kentish Press in the late 1820s and 1830s.

iii. The County and 'Reform'

At the election of 1831, the new rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' was utilised to articulate the brief change of regime, when Thomas Law Hodges and Thomas Rider were elected as 'Reforming Knights of the Shire', ousting Sir Edward Knatchbull. While their opponents argued in vain that the 'Men of Kent' should retain their status by staunchly defending the inviolate constitution, the 'Reformers' argued that their historical attachment to ancient rights made the 'Men of Kent' natural advocates of 'Reform'.[109] So powerful was the narrative of the 'Reforming Men of Kent', that the election was even reported in the national press where it conjured up a sense of utopian euphoria. According to the *Morning Herald*:

> The same sturdy, energetic, and uncompromising love of independence has distinguished the 'Men of Kent' from the day of 'William the Conqueror' even down the present auspicious reign of 'William the Reformer'. Again they have poured forth their manly

[107] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 11.
[108] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 39-42.
[109] See for example, letter from an 'East Kent Yeoman', *KH*, 24/5/1832; *KG*, 6/5/1831, 10/6/1831.

> array in constitutional defence of their ancient rights, and waved their 'green branches' in the sunshine of a 'glorious triumph...[110]

The *Maidstone Gazette* itself reported upon a scene of exclusive, *hierarchical* yet interdependent Kentish 'yeomanry', whose distinctive virtues justified their claims to power and prosperity. The article describes: 'twenty thousand of the respectable and sturdy yeomanry of Kent, consisting one grand assemblage, affording to the spectator a proud specimen of Britain's wealth and power, in the most valuable of her possessions – her hardy sons'; Although 'this vast multitude' was 'diversified by immeasurable degrees of rank, property and intelligence' their purpose, like that of an army, was unified: 'THEIR COUNTRIES WEALTH!'[111] For Claris at the *Herald*, the 'Men of Kent' had finally been embodied on Penenden Heath as he wished to see them: as 'the spirited and intelligent inhabitants of Kent, eager to testify their love of liberty'.[112]

The 'Men of Kent's' 'yeomen' qualities were particularly highlighted as reasons for the enfranchisement of the rural and provincial middling classes, a regionally specific 'vision of the people'. At a 'Reform' dinner at Dover, Sir William Cosway alluded to the sturdy, reliability of the 'yeomanry', who came to him in a deputation at Sittingbourne to show their dedication to 'Reform'. He said of them:

> These yeomen talk little and do much. I have been thrown very much in contact with them during the last winter, and whether in putting down tumults or asserting Constitutional rights, I never wish

[110] 'Triumph of the Men of Kent', from the *Morning Herald, MGKC,* 17/5/1831.
[111] *MGKC*, 17/5/1831.
[112] *KH,* 5/5/1831. Claris's emphasis was still on the urban middle classes. Unlike the writer at the *Maidstone Gazette*, he hoped that the urban 'Men of Kent' would stand against the 'agriculturalists' for their triumphant majority.

> to be better supported...it shows that patriotism is not a rotten virtue...it does exist and proud we may be as Men of Kent, that this pattern county has shown so many examples of it. Invicta is the motto we received from our fathers, and we will transmit it untarnished to our sons. [113]

'Reforming Men of Kent' were also self-sufficient, rejecting aristocratic influence: 'Men of Kent!' declared Major Wayath in 1830, ' - you of the middle classes that have come forward to take the lead – you have no aristocracy!'[114] These arguments on behalf of the 'Reformers' and 'Liberals' endured beyond the 'Reforming' fervour of 1830/1832, even though Tory predominance was restored at elections. On the Maidstone hustings in 1837, for example, George Wade Norman drew on the idea of the 'yeoman's' independence and reliability to evoke support for Hodges. He stated: 'I am confident of success because I can rely upon the independent yeomen, who so well appreciate Mr Hodges service and who will not fail to listen to the dictates of their conscience or be swayed by influence...'.[115] Hodges was returned for West Kent, but in second place to Tory, Sir William Geary, but he only closely survived being ousted by the second Tory candidate, Sir John Filmer.[116]

iv. The Eclipse of the 'County'?

The triumph of 'Reform' in 1831/1832 did not represent a great alteration in terms of the personnel who sat at the apex of power. Rider and Hodges were, of course, still landed gentleman. Moreover, while the power of 'public opinion' in favour of 'Reform', meant that the reactionary Knatchbull could not be the man

[113] Reform Dinner at Dover, 1831, *KH*, 20/5/1831. Another example of this kind of rhetoric can be found in a letter from an 'East Kent Yeoman', *KH*, 24/3/1831; *MJKA*, 17/5/1831.
[114] *MGKC*, 31/7/1832.
[115] George Wade Norman, notes for speech on the hustings at Maidstone, 31/8/1837. CKS, U310 F63/2.
[116] Andrews, 'Political Issues in the County of Kent', 74.

of the 'moment', his participation in the popular anti-Catholic campaigns illustrates how he was already successfully reconfiguring himself for the 'new' era, placing himself at the head of broad, yet hierarchical, conceptions of the 'county'. Sir Edward and his followers knew how to wield the rhetoric and symbolism of the 'Men of Kent'. Under the reformed electorate, Knatchbull's electoral triumphs for the new East Kent constituency from 1832, produced images that were remembered for many years after. John Mockett marvelled at the scene of his re-election in 1835, where 'Sir Edward was accompanied to the ground, by four hundred and fifty-seven gentlemen yeomanry, and ninety-six gentlemen's carriages', which he felt must have given the baronet much pleasure and gratification.[117] Indeed, there was some resonance behind the Duke of Wellington's opinion, even after the defeat of 1831, that the county of Kent 'will not be satisfied unless Sir Edward Knatchbull is its member.[118] Knatchbull, of the ancient, landed family, was still at the head of the 'county community' and a leader of the 'Men of Kent'.

Nevertheless, the era of the Kent county meeting, the 'county on display' and, indeed, of the politicised 'Men of Kent' was also soon to pass, as political configurations evolved in the aftermath of 1832.[119] By the late 1830s, elite county politics had moved back into the Town Hall and the Public House dining room: the domains from which it had briefly emerged in the 1820s. Although

[117] *Mockett's Journal,* 14/1/1835, 137. See also Cowton, *Autobiography,* 67.
[118] Duke of Wellington to Reverend G.R.Gleig, 30/6/1831, USSC WP1/1188/6.
[119] I emphasise that post 1832 political configurations 'evolved 'rather than 'emerged', as I have demonstrated that party organisation was highly evolved in the 1820s in all but name. For the development of party politics in Kent post 1832, see Atkinson, 'Conservative and Liberal', 143-147. For a challenge to the conventional picture of the 'rise of party' post 1832 and the 'importance of recycling political languages' in the allegedly 'new' worlds of Conservatives and Liberals, see Vernon, *Politics and the People*, 177-181.

Chartism was weak in Kent, the outdoor meeting place was reclaimed by 'radicals' and political unions, such as the West Kent Political Union, who gathered on Wrotham Heath in 1834, and on a much more spectacular scale in urban and industrial areas such as Oldham.[120] By 1841, the Kent county meeting, with its pretensions of unanimity, had practically reverted to its incarnation of the early 1820s, when a narrow section of the county elite, including Knatchbull, Lord Camden and Hodges, gathered in the county Sessions house in order to 'address the Queen on the birth of her heir'.[121]

Occasions of mass contact between different sections of the 'county community' were no longer associated with debates about political citizenship or national or county electoral politics. Stimulated by the events of 1830, hierarchical yet inclusive societal imaginings were manifested in the agricultural festivals, cattle shows and ploughing matches, that became the common practice of landlords and organisations such as the Labourers Friend Society.[122] At the Kent and Canterbury cattle show in December 1837, for example, the *Canterbury Journal* reflected upon the labourers dining together with their landlords in order to receive prizes for their ploughing prowess: 'it was a truly pleasing sight to observe the agricultural labourers ranged...behind the Presidents seat... many an honest, hard-working fellow appeared to feel deeply the...praise awarded to him'. They allegedly listened as Thomas Neame, an East Kent landowner, spoke of 'the height to which they had raised their agriculture', making Kent deserving of the title 'Garden of England'. They

[120] *MJKA*, 16/9/1834. For a discussion of the increasing use of outdoor meetings by radicals in the 1830s and 1840's see Vernon, *Politics and the People*, 208-213.
[121] *The Times*, 8/12/1841.
[122] Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England.*

cheered with Knatchbull and the others as toasts were drunk to 'Old England'.[123] Nevertheless, as in 1828, this semblance of unity remained fragile: these particular festivities took place five months before the 'Battle of Bossenden Wood' in the Blean, barely seven miles from the centre of Canterbury. This incident, at which eleven lives were lost, illustrated the cultural gulf that remained between 'masters and men' away from such moments of organised contact as the ploughing contest.[124]

In terms of elite county politics, the most emotive cause of the late 1830s and 1840s, agricultural 'protection', was one that motivated a sense of belonging to the 'landed interest' and 'agrarian England', rather than stimulating 'county' perspectives on a national question, and vast evocations of the 'county', as had been the case in with Catholic Emancipation and 'Reform'.[125] The rhetoric of the staunchly 'protectionist' Conservative dinners of the late 1830s was predominantly that of 'Old England'. The West Kent Conservative dinner in 1837, at the Star Inn, Maidstone, opened with 'the old constitutional toast of 'Church and King''. Sir Edward Filmer waxed lyrical on the maintenance of England's ancient constitution from the time of King John, while Knatchbull rose for his speech after a song, written especially for the occasion, celebrating how 'Peasant, Peer and Yeomanry', would not let England fall! Such words were made pertinent by recent Whig attacks on the Corn Laws and the passage

[123] *Canterbury Weekly Journal and Farmers Gazette*, 16/12/1837.
[124] *Canterbury Weekly Journal and Farmers Gazette*, 6/2/1838; Barry Reay, *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers*.
[125] 'Men of Kent' rhetoric has been used to rally resistance to the malt tax in 1829. For example, see *MJKA*, 1/9/1829. An Englishman' had written to the *Maidstone Journal*, 'you are acknowledged as a brave and loyal people: but I would ask of what use are all the proud trophies of war, if the advantages they have procured for us are to be thrown away in peace?' For details on the reaction among brewers, see Mathias, *The Brewing Industry*, 492-3.

of the Irish tithes bill.[126] The 'yeomanry' were regularly toasted as 'the strength, the very sinews of the country', who harboured 'strong feelings of attachment to Church and King', and who would therefore, hopefully, vote Tory![127] These generic appeals to a 'sense of Old England' became a mainstay in articulations of the varying fortunes of agriculture into the era of Peel and the anti-Corn Law League. Indeed, by the late 1830s, although the Kent Invicta still flew in the background, the patriotic rhetoric and symbolism of Kentish 'protectionist' politics became increasingly indistinguishable from those of the Conservative Association meetings in other agrarian and southern counties.[128]

4. Conclusion

The power of the 'Men of Kent', then, suggests that conceptions of regional identity were a channel through which the wider nation was imagined and local and national issues engaged with.[129] The 'sense of the county' invoked through county meetings was historically specific. It was forged through the political vibrancy and debates about political citizenship in the years between 1828 and 1832. Against the backdrop of ongoing instability, imaginings of the 'county' could be relatively inclusive, but on strictly hierarchical grounds. Those on the

[126] *The Times*, 19/1/1837.
[127] *Kent Observer*, East Kent election 1832, 20 /12/1832; *The Times* 9/5/1835, 24/9/1835;
[128] The following examples are all from *The Times*. Worcester Conservative Meeting, 30/9/1835; South Warwickshire Election, 27/6/1835; Grand Conservative Dinner at Framlingham, East Suffolk, 3/10/1836; North Lancashire Conservative anniversary dinner, 24/10/1836; Conservative dinner at Maldon, Essex, 27/10/1836; East Norfolk Conservative Association, 31/10/1836; West Norfolk Conservative Association 17/11/1836; Great Conservative meeting in Cornwall, 5/12/1836; Conservative festival in Tiverton, 16/10/1837; Buckinghamshire agricultural dinner, 5/10/1835; East Norfolk Conservative Association, 31/10/1836. I was inspired in my thinking about the relative importance of local and national issues at Conservative dinners by the paper 'Peel Appeal', given by Matthew Cragoe at the 'British History, 1815-1945' seminar, Institute of Historical Research, 2005.
[129] In this sense, nationhood in Kent needs to be placed in the framework of Alon Confino's ideas for the development of nationalism in nineteenth-century Germany, as much as Colley's theories about 'Britishness'. Confino argues that the nation was conceived only to a complex interweaving of local, regional and national representations, to which the metaphor of the local provided the framework for national thinking, Confino, *The Nation As a Local Metaphor.*

peripheries, notably the labouring poor, had to conform to the marginalized roles allotted to them, or their exclusion was starkly demonstrated – as it was for the 'Swing' protestors in 1830. Nevertheless, 'Swing' participants drew upon 'county' culture, alongside many other influences. Regional perspectives on nationhood could have resonance with people of all classes, even if any sense of unity was inherently transient.

At the heart of the 'sense of the county' was the identity and masculinity of the 'Men of Kent'. This notion of 'English' masculinity reached its peak upon Penenden Heath in 1828, when Winchilsea and the 'Brunswickers' successfully embodied their 'qualities' – perceptions of their 'sturdy' and 'manly' bodies bolstered their power and directed the action.[130] At this moment, the 'Men of Kent' were truly hegemonic. Indeed, the evidence arguably provides a glimpse of the performances and 'iterative norms' through which men exercised power in a wider area of rural and provincial England at this time.[131] The collaboration of William Cobbett on Penenden Heath in 1828, and evidence from 1830, also suggests that the landless poor shared in some conceptions of militaristic and agrarian masculinity. They also shared, at this particular moment, in a boisterous, male drinking culture, a familiar way of behaving that apparently united people of many social backgrounds. The power evoked by the appearance of the 'Men of Kent', however, was intrinsically linked to the *verbal* reiteration of their 'foundation myths': even for those with the 'sturdiest'

[130] I draw here upon the theories of R.W.Connell, who argues for the centrality of dominant perceptions of the male body in establishing hegemonic masculinities and underpinning male power, Connell, *Masculinities*, ch. 2.

[131] For more on the iterative processes which construct gender roles, in other words, the repeated actions which become cultural norms, see Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 10.

appearances and loudest voices, their defining actions as 'defenders of the nation' were chiefly rhetorical.

As a form of masculinity, dominant in the public life of the 'county community', the identity of the 'Men of Kent' stood in contrast with the domestic and often evangelical masculinities of the rising middling classes of industrial and urban areas. This illustrates how the performance and embodiment of gender roles could be contingent upon the cultures of specific economic and social locations. Within this context, the 'Men of Kent' were remarkably flexible. The Tory elite exploited their qualities of loyalty and devotion to the nation, to uphold visions of hierarchical, landed society. Meanwhile, 'radicals' and 'Reformers' appropriated their 'love of liberty' to argue for wider political rights. They also drew upon the rugged, sturdy qualities of the 'yeoman', whose physicality and relationship with the land were seen to justify their claims to power. Articulations of 'Men of Kent' were further dependent upon understandings of what they were not: the 'unruly, animalistic Irish', as represented by Shiel and Darnley on Penenden Heath, were particularly symbolic of this, as will be explored further in the next chapter. Women were also chiefly excluded: the evidence from county meetings gives little idea about how they perceived the 'county', or their attachment to it, if at all.[132]

[132] A glimpse of an elite woman's perspective of the county can be gained through the letters of Jane Austen. To the novelist, the county - whether Kent or Hampshire - often meant certain groups of family and friends. See for example Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 25-27/10/1800, 26/6/1808, 9/12/1808, Le Faye, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters*, 49, 133, 155-8.

As a 'political identity', however, the 'Men of Kent' had finite limits. When questions of citizenship took a backseat in the priorities of the Kentish elite to agricultural 'protection', and the labourers' friend and allotment movement, so did the 'Men of Kent'. In the aftermath of 1830, and in the light of ongoing unrest in the countryside, evocations of peaceful social hierarchy, and the shared landscape of knowledge associated with 'Old England' were now more pertinent than assertions of the superiority of the 'Men of Kent' over Irish Catholics upon the bloodless field of Penenden Heath.

Chapter Six: Kent and the 'Sister Kingdom'

1. Introduction

This chapter explores the significant 'Others' that delineated Kentish identities along the lines of gender, ethnicity, race and religion, and how these were formulated from a regional perspective.[1] In various incarnations, the 'Men of Kent', and their county, were staked against the people and environments of many different sites of Europe, Empire and the wider world. Regional perspectives on nationhood in Kent were configured in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as martial and stridently masculine, partially as the result of the ongoing wars, which heightened awareness of the threat and location of the French.[2] In a culture in which 'stoutness' and physical prowess were perceived virtues, notions of 'Englishness' and 'Otherness' were underpinned by conceptions of food and consumption. In the *Ingoldsby Legends*, for example, the French are often associated with a diet of 'meagre soup' and broths in which lurked unknown substances, such as Bull Frogs![3] Emphasis on inferiority and effeminacy were combined with fantasies of exoticism and romance, as well as positive and negative comparisons of the political systems between England, France, and other European nations such as Italy.[4] In addition, they could be set up against the imperial 'Other', those who were imagined as less active and less independent, like the 'negroes of the West Indies' and

[1] The significance of 'difference' and the 'Other' in understanding historical – and current - identities was famously developed by Said in *Orientalism*, 3.
[2] For the generic impact of the wars with France on nationhood, see Colley, *Britons* en passim.
[3] Barham, *The Ingoldsgy Legends*, 84, 220, 370-1.
[4] For the importance of imaginings of Italy in shaping English identities and conceptions of the 'political landscape', see Maura O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).

the 'slaves of the east'.[5] Particularly significant, however, were conceptions of Ireland and the Irish.

Ireland has often been shown to occupy a liminal position in imaginings of Britain and Empire. Sometimes seen as part of the metropole, and sometimes as a colony, her people could be conceived one moment as equal subjects, and the next deemed worthy of little more that slave-hood.[6] Somewhat in this vein, Catholic Ireland could be constituted as the ambiguously gendered 'Sister Kingdom', helpless and childlike, tyrannised by either Catholic Priests, the governance of Westminster, or crippling tithes.[7] The choice of oppression depended on an individual's political stance. Simultaneously, Ireland in the aggressive and masculine guise of Daniel O' Connell and the Catholic Association, could be conceived as a very real threat. In late 1828 and early 1829, the panic surrounding tales of O'Connell's marauding army, poised ominously on the other side of the Irish Sea, could resemble an invasion scare. The heroic subjects that defined the depraved objects, whichever way they were conceived, could take on the guise of the 'Men of Kent'. Ireland needed the help and protection of the 'Men of Kent'; it was the 'Men of Kent' who were compelled to act, to defend their own families and land, and the rest of the nation, against Ireland's perceived threat. The juxtaposition was yet again underlined by the metaphor of the countryside and environment: Ireland was imagined as violent,

[5] Editorial, *MGKC,* 10/2/1829.
[6] Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, 86.
[7] *MGKC*, 29/7/1828.

barren and dark, 'laid waste' by famine, or sinking into a bog. Meanwhile, Kent remained etched in the mind as fertile, beautiful and free.[8]

2. Kent and the 'Sister Kingdom'

i. The Irish in Kent and Southern England

Negative connotations of 'Irishness' in England were not new.[9] Connections between Ireland and insurrection, and even treachery, were made during the turbulent wartime period because of various 'conspiracies' between Irish people and the French.[10] Stereotypes of their 'wild' unruly nature had long been in circulation.[11] The incorporation of these potentially subversive and 'wild' people into the body politic had therefore been troubling from the very advent of the Union.

Fears about 'Irishness' in Kent were chiefly contingent upon recent happenings at 'home' and in Ireland. The post-War agricultural recession hit Ireland hard and resulted in sporadic periods of famine, deep poverty, and rising agrarian violence.[12] Incendiarism, demanding or threatening notes, animal maiming, forced marriages and murder were committed by groups such as Rockites, Whiteboys and Ribbonmen, although many such acts may have been those of disaffected but unorganised

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[8] Edward Knatchbull's Address To the Freeholders of Kent, 8/10/1828, CKS U951/C33/13.
[9] Pre-famine attitudes to the Irish are addressed briefly in Sheridan Gilley, 'English Attitudes to the Irish in England', 1780-1900 in C.Holmes, ed., *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 81-1900. This seminal work argues that the differences between the English and the Irish were not conceived along lines of race.
[10] On 'conspiracies' with the French, see Ruan O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rising of 1803* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003).
[11] Martin, ''Becoming a Race Apart': Representing Irish Racial Difference and the British Working Class in Victorian Critiques of Capitalism', in McDonough ed., *Was Ireland a Colony?,* 192.
[12] Foster, *Modern Ireland,* 318-20; O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine,* 135.

individuals, partaking in a culture of resistance established since at least the 1760s.[13] Their demands were primarily for better access to the land and its profits, although they could also be motivated by deeper ideological underpinnings; the Munster Rockites of the early 1820s, for example, held millenarian beliefs about the nature of their oppression, associating their economic grievances with the oppression of Catholicism and consequently harboured deep hatred towards the Ascendancy and its servants.[14] In the mid 1820s, it was the achievement of Daniel O'Connell to develop this political awareness and unite the cause of disaffected peasants and labourers with that of middle-class religious rights campaigners, through the Catholic Association and the 'penny rent', making Catholicism a 'national' issue in Ireland.[15]

These developments, and the consequent quasi-colonial relationship between the people of England and Ireland, cast indelible shadows across English politics and society that reached deep into the southern English provinces. The specific economic circumstances of the southern English counties, however, were also influenced by the effects of the Union. This in turn defined conceptions of 'Irishness'. Unlike in the English north-west, with its proximity to Ireland and its ports and industrial centres, the levels of permanent migration of Irish people to the south were negligible. The two great exceptions, of course, were London, where permanent immigrants from many countries sought employment in the various trades and

[13] Stephen Randolph Gibbon, *Captain Rock: Night Errant* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 10-11.
[14] J. S. Donnelly Jr., 'Captain Rock: Millenarianism and Sectarianism in the Rockite Movement of 1821-4', in Samuel Clarke and J.S. Donnelly Jr., eds., *Irish Peasants. Violent and Political Unrest, 1780 – 1914* (Manchester University Press, 1983), 102-139.
[15] O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine*, 59-60; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 296-298.

industries, and Bristol, first port of call from Ireland.[16] In Kent, barrack towns and dockyards were the hubs of mainly transient Irish populations, soldiers and sailors, sometimes accompanied by their wives and families.[17] Regiments lodged at the barracks in Canterbury, for example, often had Irish recruits.[18] The distribution of Roman Catholic churches in Kent further indicates a concentration of Irish in military and naval areas. In East Kent there were officially only three chapels, the largest being near the dockyard at Miletown, Sheerness, where there was said to be a congregation of thirty four. The congregations at West Kent chapels were rather larger, their fluctuations depending upon the number of troops in garrison. Hundreds, however, worshipped at Gillingham (near to Chatham dockyards) and Greenwich, while two thousand one hundred and fifty were associated with the church in Woolwich.[19]

The Irish were an increasingly visible presence throughout provincial southern England in the guise of 'visiting' harvesters. Itinerant Irish were employed for a variety of tasks, including reaping, and apple and cherry picking in the market gardens. The most intense labour requirement was in the picking of hops. In most circumstances, hop-growers required external labour in order to complete the harvest in a short period of about two weeks in September before the hops went bad. Large numbers of 'outside' labourers had been employed in the late eighteenth century: '5000 strangers', for example, were employed at Sundridge (near

[16] Frank Neal, 'The English Poor Law, the Irish migrant and the laws of settlement and removal, 1819-1879', in Boyce and Swift, eds., *Problems and Perspectives in Irish History since 1800.*
[17] PP 1834, Poor Law vol. XXXVIII, appendix (e) vagrancy, 54.
[18] PRO HO 40/21, 40/268.
[19] Returns of numbers of non-Anglican places of worship in Kent, CKS Q/CR3. According to the *MJKA* there were 8 places of worship for Roman Catholics in Kent, out of 288 in the whole of England and Wales, *MJKA*, 2/2/1830.

Sevenoaks) in 1793.[20] In the early part of the 1820s, when the agrarian economy appeared to be on an upswing, a shortage of hands was complained of, despite poor yields of hops.[21] By the mid 1830s, James Ellis, one of the largest hop growers in Kent and, indeed, England, employed four thousand visitors, including Irish, 'in a heavy year', to harvest his hops alone.[22] The Irish were not solely travelling to Kent and there were many other areas in of the surrounding counties that attracted high levels of immigrant labour, such as the 'hop capital' of Surrey, Farnham.[23] Nor were they the only ones coming to pick the hops: the arrival of Scottish and London workers at the time of the harvest were also mentioned, but with less regularity.[24]

A typical profile of Irish itinerate labourers is difficult to formulate. Some of the male harvesters travelled individually or in groups, and returned to Ireland to harvest their own crop of potatoes and pay the rents, which were due in November.[25] Sometimes, they came over in labour gangs, where an agent negotiated for work and advanced money to the immigrants, taking a cut of profits. Their work done, the Irish were 'thrown' upon the parish or, probably in a move to keep the profile of the schemes as low as possible in sensitive localities, were given forged passes allegedly from a Kentish parish, and then pushed on to Surrey or

[20] Mathias, *The Brewing Industry*, 492-3.
[21] *MGKC*, 25/7/1821.
[22] Mathias, *The Brewing Industry*, 492-3.
[23] E. J. T. Collins, 'Migrant Labour in British Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, vol. 29, no. 1 (1976), 38.
[24] PP 1834, Poor Law, Rural Questions, vol. III and IX. Fifteen Kent parishes mention that they had Irish, and sometimes Scotch, non-parishioners in their parishes. These included a cross-section of seaside and rural parishes in all parts of Kent, including Ash (near Sandwich), Northfleet and Margate,(on the Isle of Thanet) and Lewisham (north-west Kent).
[25] PP 1834, Poor Law, vol. XXXVIII, appendix (e) vagrancy, 54.

London.[26] Some of the English farmers, for whom Irish workers were cheaper than locals, wrote either to Irish parishes, or the organisers of labour gangs, asking them to come. Others travelled with their families, including single mothers.[27]

In the early part of the decade, the 'visiting' Irish were clearly present: in 1823/4, expenditure on Irish vagrants in Kent was particularly high compared to other southern counties, and were concentrated particularly in north-west Kent, near to London, and the hop picking areas around Maidstone and Canterbury.[28] The exact numbers are impossible to discern, as they jostled for attention in overseers accounts with those needing assistance from Scotland, and nearby London and Surrey, and the origins of all could be blurred with terms such as 'travellers' and 'strangers'.[29] Their shadowy presence can also be gleaned from the scant evidence left by those who died on the job, such as the two 'strange Irish reapers', Patrick and Timothy Collins, who were buried in the summers of 1834 and 1835 respectively, in the parish of Downe, north-west Kent, where they had been employed.[30]

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[26] PP 1834, Poor Law, vol. XXXVIII, appendix (e) vagrancy, 54-55; *MJKA*, 21/9/1830.
[27] PP 1830, Poor Law Ireland (7), vol. II, appendix A. A.A. Bernard, a J.P for Forkhill in Ulster, mentioned that two-thirds of the total number of young men in his parish made the annual trip to England, and they went when the 'English farmers wrote for them', 305; PP 1834, Poor Law, vol. XXXVIII, appendix (e) vagrancy, 54.
[28] PP 1823, Vagrant Laws. Sums paid by treasurers of counties on account of Irish and Scotch vagrants, Kent: £44/7/6 paid for Irish vagrants removed by pass, 17/4 for Scottish. In Hampshire, £6/ 6/ 8 was paid for Irish, £3/ 4/ 6 was paid for 'Scotch'. In Surrey £2 /10 was paid for Irish, £16/ 14 was paid for 'Scotch'. In Sussex, only one Scotch family was conveyed at a cost of £1 /18. No Irish families were conveyed.
[29] Maidstone All Saints Parish Overseers Accounts, CKS P241/13-19, 1829; Farnborough Overseers Assessments and Accounts, BLHL, P144 11/4, 1826-1829; Bromley Overseers Account, BLHL, P47/12/2, 1818-1833.
[30] Downe Parish Records, BLHL, P123 Addn, M 1/14.

For most of the 1820s, the Irish only really became 'problematic' when they claimed for parish relief in England. Changes to the Poor Law in 1819, meant that a free journey back to Ireland could be procured by applying for parish relief at an English parish and, as Frank Neal has demonstrated, travelling Irish labourers took advantage of the opportunities this opened up.[31] The mechanics of the removal system meant that the cost fell heaviest on London parishes, who were already dealing with large immigrant populations, and the counties west and north of London, rather than the counties of the south-east. All Irish deportees from Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex, would be sent to London, before returning to Ireland via Bristol or Liverpool, and each parish en route shared in their travelling costs.[32] For those leaving Kent, it was a long and arduous journey home, particularly for travellers from the north of Ireland, including Archibald and Sarah Williamson of County Down, and Rosalyn Aslan and her two children from County Armagh. Issued with passes at Maidstone, they had to travel to London, then overland as far as Lancaster, before being passed to the master of a ship to Ireland. At each parish, they would have been issued with relief and walking money.[33] Most Irish paupers from Kent travelled straight to St Magnus's, the first parish into Middlesex over London Bridge, and applied to Henry Gill, the pass master there, who chiefly dealt with paupers from Kent. Sometimes, this was the first relief they called upon on their journey home, having completely avoided calling on assistance

[31] A new act of 1819 made it much easier for English parishes to remove anyone who had claimed poor relief, including Irish 'paupers and vagrants', as it was no longer necessary for them to have committed and offence', Frank Neal, 'The English Poor Law', 100.
[32] Neal, 'The English Poor Law', 102.
[33] CKS, QS 23/4, 1829.

in Kent.[34] Alternatively, passes were sent to Gill by coach ahead of the travellers arrival by foot.[35] The figure of six thousand five hundred and thirty three was quoted from official passes issued between 1826 and 1830 for those who were shipped back from Kent, Middlesex and Surrey.[36] Henry Gill alone, conveyed three thousand and seventy one in 1832.[37]

The numbers are inexact, although they do suggest that the Irish were coming in increasing numbers, targeting specific crops and areas. However, by the late 1820s, the *perception* of the Irish was that they were descending on Kent in *vast* numbers. The visibility of the Irish increased in the late 1820s and early 1830s, peaking around 1829, when the Bromley overseers recorded, with typical lack of specificity, 'dozens' of 'Irish', 'travellers' and their families.[38] In West Wickham, about fifteen miles from the centre of the metropolis, the 1834 Poor Law inquiry recorded that a 'very great number' had 'driven our own poor out of the harvest work'.[39] The poor Catholic Irish, representing aberrations to the perceived domestic ideal, were thus described through the language of pestilence, of 'infestations', 'influx's' and 'swarms', conjuring up images of an invasive species – the 'reckless children of St

[34] PP 1834, Poor Law, vol. XXXVIII, appendix (e) vagrancy, 11.
[35] PP 1834, Poor Law, vol. XXXVIII, appendix (e) vagrancy, 22.
[36] PP 1834, Poor Law, vol. X, 67.
[37] PP 1834, Poor Law, vol. XXXVIII, appendix (e) vagrancy, 22-23.
[38] The overseers' accounts for Bromley, Orpington, Sevenoaks, Brasted, Otford, and Shoreham, in north- west Kent in the latter 1820s, record intermittent payouts between June and November, given to Irish men and women who had become ill while working in the parish. The number of mentions peaks in 1829, where among those aided were an 'Irishwoman (pregnant) and family'. BLHL, Bromley overseeers accounts, 1818-1833, P47/12/2, 21/5/1829, 27/6/1829, 24/7/1829, 30/7/1829.
[39] PP 1834, Poor Law, Rural Questions, III (West Wickham).

Patrick' – who impaired the health of the body politic.[40] Other accounts highlighted their terrible standards of living, their propensity for sleeping in barns and their very ragged, often partial, dress.[41]

ii. The Irish 'Problem' and the Poor Law

Visiting Irish harvesters, then, were not a new phenomenon in Kent at the end of the 1820s. They were, however, both increasing in number and newly constructed, in various ways, as an intense economic and moral 'problem'. One of the reasons for this was their presence in rural parishes in a period of economic hardship in which the English Poor Law was under increasing pressure, not just economically, but also from cultural and moral perspectives. This scrutiny made the subjects of poor relief, domestic or 'foreign', particularly visible.[42]

There was no consensus about the 'problem' of the Poor Law in the 1820s. The ideology that found its way into the legislation of 1834, corresponded with that of many government Poor Law commissioners and social investigators, such as Edwin

[40] Cranbrook petition. 'To the Right Hon of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled, the Humble Petition of the Undersigned Farmers, Tradesmen, and Other Inhabitants, of the Parish of Cranbrook, in the County and Weald of Kent'. Among matters that they beg too be taken into consideration include 'the overwhelming *influx* into this country of Irish labourers'. Measures they 'beg' include 'extending the operation of the Poor Laws to Ireland'. *MGKC*, 31/8/1830. 30/11/1830.

[41] *MJKA*, 30/8/1830, *MGKC*, 23/7/1829. See also Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, 98. In a parallel with English responses to unrest in Ireland in the 1820s and 1830s, Howkins also observes that hostility and racism towards the Irish was increased in the 1850s and 1860s because of political developments elsewhere: 'deliberate campaigns in the north-west' and the Fenian bombings in Clerkenwell in 1867.

[42] For this issue discussed with reference to Irish in London in the same period, see Seleski , 'Identity, Immigration, and the State: Irish Immigrants and English Settlement in London, 1790-1840', in Behlmer & Leventhal eds., *Singular Continuities: Tradition, Nostalgia and Identity in Modern British Culture*, 18.

Chadwick, and their ideological mentors, Malthus, Ricardo and Bentham.[43] This grouping, although not necessarily always in unified agreement, saw the Elizabethan law, in which the poor were maintained when out of work or in the receipt of small wages by allowances provided by parish rate payers in their parish of settlement, as contrary to the principles of free-trade and to the quasi-entrepreneurial aspirations of liberal individualists.[44] These qualities, which foreshadowed those of Victorian 'self-help' ideologies, were increasingly asserted as essential tenets of respectable manhood by the rising industrial middle classes, and their allies in the Whig 'Reform' Movement.[45] English claimants on their own parish were thus constituted as economic dependents, both 'unmanly' and moral ciphers.

In essence, this theory saw no difference between the English and the Irish; free-trade, indeed, should govern the un-tethered movement of labour to where it was required, and personal endeavour and morality should prevent the extremes of

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[43] The ideological underpinnings of the New Poor Law are discussed in J.R.Poynter, *Society and Pauperism. English Ideas on Poor Relief* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), xv, 106-165; For a discussion of historiography and the ways in which Poor Law and its application in rural England was driven as much by 'Liberal Tory' landlords, as 'Benthamites' see Peter Mandler, 'Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1990), 81-83.

[44] This practice of topping up low wages from the poor rates regulated by bread prices, known as the Speenhamland system, had been used sporadically throughout southern England since 1775 and had caused much controversy, see Hobsbawm & Rudé, *Captain Swing*, 27-33. The most important texts on the Poor Law include Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*; Michael E. Rose, *The English Poor Law, 1780- 1930* (Plymouth: Latimer Trent & Co., 1971); Anthony Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment and Implementation, 1832-39* (London: Hutchinson 1978); Derek Fraser, ed., *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1976).

[45] According to D.A.Baugh, these beliefs were held despite the fact that the crux of the problem was not the workings of the system itself, but the exceptional depression conditions that any system would have difficulty dealing with, D.A.Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in Southeast England, 1790-1834', in *Economic History Review*, no 1, vol. 28 (1975), 50-68.

poverty, and its near relation depravity, in all but the incapacitated. Nevertheless, as Mary Poovey has demonstrated, distinctions were made between English and Irish that illustrated the hypocrisy of free-trade: James Phillips Kay saw the poorer classes of Irish in Manchester as a pollution of the English body politic when not usefully engaged, but also a commodity that should be made available, by the subservient Irish economy, for the needs of English industry in times of labour shortage.[46]

Similar ideological contradictions can be seen operating in Kent, although from a predominantly 'paternalist' and 'protectionist' perspective. While some 'liberal Tory' landlords embraced certain aspects of the new law, as a necessary response to a 'crisis in paternalism', the Irish, as an aberration to still deeply held 'paternalistic' ideals and organic notions of nationhood, including visions of 'yeoman society', became a particular focus for the landed elite in Kent.[47] Lord Teynham, challenging Wellington on his policy of non-intervention in the Poor Laws, raised the issue of the 'invasion of Irish and Scotch vagrants' as a 'dreadful evil' that 'must be stopped by legislative enactment' before they destroyed the body politic.[48] Lord Stanhope, a perennial campaigner for allotments and a return to 'yeoman society', presented a petition in the Lords in July 1830 from a combination of the owners and occupiers of the land in Kent, which complained of the increase of their parochial 'burdens'

[46] Poovey, 'Curing the Social Body in 1832: James Phillips Kay and the Irish in Manchester', *Gender & History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1993).
[47] Mandler, 'Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law', 83.
[48] Lord Teynham, 'Plans for amelioration and observations on the condition of the labouring classes'. Paper sent to the Duke of Wellington, April 1830, USSC WP1/1108/24.

from the number of Irish poor, and prayed for 'the House to adopt some measure for the removal of Distress in Ireland, and for the purpose of compelling the landed proprietors of that kingdom to support *their own poor*'. According to Stanhope, the distress in Ireland was seen as directly causing many of the problems in Kent: because of their 'wretched poverty' the Irish poor were being 'induced to migrate to this country, where, especially in the county of Kent, they became exceedingly burthensome'.[49]

Responses of middle and upper-class observers and 'victims' of 'Swing' drew upon a vocabulary of 'Irishness', which had evolved in this context. Irish 'strangers' were named among the many 'foreigners' and 'visitors' who were purported to have started the fires, roaming from area to area with malicious intent. Among the rumours were allegations that the fires were a Jesuit plot, or that they were the work of Daniel O'Connell and his agents.[50] A refusal to admit that their 'paternalist' policies had foundered, led to allegations from a Frinstead freeholder that the rioters were not 'the Kentish people' and that the domestic system had been compromised by external pollutants: the riots were not a rising of the 'distressed peasantry' but the work of a foreign 'banditti' who, in inducing the labourers commit capital crimes, were 'murderers'.[51] Representations of the behaviour of the Irish drew upon the racialised language of 'slavery' and 'savagery', to make sense of the state of the 'domestic' and 'foreign' poor. At the height of the crisis, in November 1830, a 'freeholder' wrote that the decline in 'yeoman society' had rendered once happy prosperous

[49] Lord Stanhope, 9/7/1830, House of Lords, *Hansard*, New Series, vol. XXV, 1121.
[50] PRO HO 44/23, 44/22; *KH*, 20/11/1830.
[51] Henry Tylden to Sir Edward Knatchbull, November 1830, CKS U951 C14/9.

smallholders that distinctly un-English category of 'slaves'. Moreover, if the Irish did not gain Poor Laws, he continued, 'our Poor will ever lose the benefit of harvest – and hop picking - through the eruption of those swarms of half naked, half starved and half savage intruders'.[52]

The explicit denigration of the Irish can thus be interpreted as the consequence of a 'moral panic' where the Irish were rendered a convenient scapegoat for a perceived breakdown of the body-politic, and through which the nation was (re)-imagined as a familial ideal (which, blatantly, it was not).[53] The focus on the Irish in Kent between 1828 and 1832 was thus a culturally specific response in the light of the uneasy consequences of the Act of Union, to the wider instability of the rural economy.[54] Indeed, while the Irish were increasingly targeted as the root cause of agrarian England's problems, and government commissions were set up, their engagement at harvest time at low wages continued apace. Cobbett identified this ideological duplicity, asserting that Irish labourers were employed by the same Members of Parliament who had 'represented the invasion of Irish labourers as a great evil, and especially as one cause of the sufferings of the people of England'.[55] The tension between looking after 'our own' and the needs of the capitalist market

[52] A letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull baronet MP from 'A Freeholder', November 1830, CKS U951 C14/2.
[53] The notion of a moral panic was developed in Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics. The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (Oxford: Martin Robinson, 1980. Second edition), 192-198. According to Cohen, a 'moral panic' happens when 'structural conditions' create a 'dissident group', the demonisation of which responds to the interests of another, dominant group (e.g. the middle classes). They are therefore 'scapegoated' as a major cause of insecurity, even though they were merely symptomatic of the particularly transient state of the parameters which defined acceptable behaviour and values in their society.
[54] Martin, 'Becoming a Race Apart', 192. I am suggesting that the focus on the Irish in Kent between 1828 and 1832 was, in a comparable fashion, symptomatic of the wider instability of the rural economy.
[55] *CPR*, 22/1/1831.

were explicitly contested in the *Maidstone Gazette* in November 1830. A correspondent wrote to blame the fires on the employment of Irish labourers in preference to local men, and faced a fierce response from the editorial column and the letters of Kentish farmers. His respondents condemned the actions of the rioters, but were still reluctant to completely negate responsibility for their 'own' poor: 'Landowners may be blameable in employing Irish labourers while their own poor are starving', wrote one replier, 'but are the employers to be driven out of this preference by the point of a firebrand?'[56] Agrarian economic distress in the 1820s and 1830s, thus brought into sharp relief the Imperial and market-orientated frameworks through which societal hierarchies were formulated.

iii. The 'Kentish' and 'Irish' Poor

Dislike of 'foreigners' amongst the working classes in the early nineteenth century was also partially conditioned by economic circumstances: increasing competition, low wages, and rising cost of living. Aside from undermining their 'local' rights and the remnants of the eighteenth century 'moral economy', itinerant labour meant local families were put out of work, and reliant on poor relief given out on increasingly tyrannical terms.[57] It is thus difficult to discern between economic desperation and dislike of 'foreigners' taking work, and any perception of 'difference', racial, ethnic, or otherwise. The former is certainly evident. In 1816, as the effects of the recession began to be felt, a county meeting in Maidstone, held

[56] *MGKC,* 28/9/1830 and subsequent issues.
[57] For 'moral economy' see E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 244-247, and *Customs in Common*, chs. 4 and 5; Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', in Randall and Charlesworth eds., *Moral Economy and Popular Protest*, 211-219.

to celebrate the marriage of Princess Charlotte to Prince Leopold, was hijacked by disaffected labourers shouting 'send a petition for the employment of the poor' and 'we can't afford to keep foreigners'.[58] A particular dislike for the Irish, which manifested itself in violent attacks, was also evident. Earlier the same year, an Irish labourer, John Haggate was murdered in a drunken brawl in Deptford, attacked by a former live-in servant, Joseph Hudson, who was described by several 'respectable' character witnesses as an otherwise 'kind' and 'humane young man'. Hudson overheard Haggate speaking Irish and attacked him, with a shout that he 'damned the Irish'.[59]

Hudson was convicted for murder, and no other motive but his hatred of the Irish was identified. While his case was rare, in that he was prosecuted, sporadic violence against the Irish was not, and was probably more common that sources indicate.[60] From the period of the wars onward, Irish troops were regularly billeted in Kent's garrisons.[61] Clashes between the military and locals in Maidstone and Canterbury were often targeted against specifically Irish troops, and the presence of Irish labourers was among the grievances of 'radicals' in 1830.[62]

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[58] *KG*, 18/6/1816.
[59] Maidstone Assizes, CKS QS/June 1816; *KG* 18/6/1816.
[60] Frank Neal has suggested: 'Throughout the nineteenth century, Britain experienced periodical violence involving the Irish on one side and English, Scots and Welsh on the other. Full and detailed analysis of this phenomenon has not yet been produced'. His own work has covered conflict in the north of England, particularly Liverpool, and seasonal migratory labour, mainly, but not exclusively, in the north. Frank Neal, 'English-Irish Conflict in Rural England: The Case of the Irish Migrant', in Belcham and Tenfelde eds., *Irish and Polish Migration in Comparative Perspective,* 52.
[61] Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, 204.
[62] Poster: Swing eh! PRO HO 40/25 9; HO 40/21, 40/268 (disputes in Canterbury, 1826); *MGKC*, 8/3/1831; *CPR,* 23/10/1830, 22/1/1831, 9/4/1831.

Evidence of attacks on the Irish calls into question the common perception, gained from Hobsbawn and Rudé, that the violence of 1830 was targeted chiefly against property.[63] Initially, Irish reapers were blamed as the instigators of the attacks.[64] More significantly, however, property of their employees, and the harvesters themselves, were a target for some of the early attacks in north-west Kent.[65] Because of the illicit nature of Irish labour gangs, and because their employees attracted great unpopularity by engaging them, many of these conflicts can only be traced through hints in letters to newspapers and small mentions, although, coinciding with the height of economic distress, there was a peak, at least in attention to these incidents, in the late 1820s. Like the fires, attacks on Irish workers were not new; indeed, Irish families had been the target of violence in West Kent and Sussex in 1829. The few cases in which details were recorded illustrate the tensions well. James Baldock was brought to trial at the East Kent Quarter Sessions in November of that year, not for attacking Irish labourers, but for accidentally mistaking William Scott of Canterbury for an Irishman as he crossed a farmyard at Sittingbourne. Set upon by three men with sticks, Scott claimed that he heard Baldcock say: 'You come here to take away our work do you? Why don't you stay at home?' Another witness, Edmund Grift, claimed that Baldock had roused him at nine o'clock the same evening and asked him whether there were Irishmen on the farm, to which he had replied 'yes' and told him where they were sleeping. Baldock and six or seven other

[63] '*Review*' articles of *Captain Swing* by Hobsbawm and Rudé, E.L. Jones, *The Economic History Review*, New Series, vol. 22, no. 2 (1969), 355; Richard Hawkins, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1969).
[64] Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, 72.
[65] Roger Wells suggests the start of the peak period of the 'Swing' disturbances can be placed around to the expulsion of Irish harvesters in July and August 1830, Wells, 'Mr William Cobbett, Captain Swing and King William IV', *Agricultural History Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, 1997, 36.

men had then gone into the farmyard, where there had been a confrontation with the partially dressed Irishmen, who were crowded into a room where they slept with 'women and children'.[66]

Other, particularly horrific attacks made the news, notably one incident at Jevington, Sussex, where local labourers made a 'savage' attack on Irish reapers. Flints were thrown at the 'unfortunate Hibernians' while they slept, striking several and seriously injuring a mother of nine children.[67] The Sussex newspapers reported several similar incidents, including another stoning attack by 'home' labourers on Irish reapers encamped at Winterbourne in August 1829.[68] Irish officials also indicate that itinerate labourers were less welcome in England than in previous, more prosperous, years. The Reverend Peter Ward, answering for Aughagour, Connaught, complained that 'latterly' harvesters visiting England from his village had been 'maltreated', while in Lower Draggen, the Reverend M. Croucher, said that about half the number who used to try and top up their income in such a way, had been deterred by 'prejudice that existed against them' when they reached their destinations.[69]

The employment of the Irish was just one of many grievances for the English labourer around 1830. Nevertheless, attacks on visiting Irish workers need to be placed alongside machine breaking, and incendiarism, as forms of protest during

[66] Maidstone Assizes, CKS QS/Michaelmas 1829.
[67] *MGKC,* 31/8/1830.
[68] Colin Brent, *Georgian Lewes 1714-1830. The Heyday of A County Town* (Lewes: Colin Brent Brooks, 1993), 58.
[69] PP 1830, Poor Law Ireland (7), vol. II, appendix A, 20, 298.

the era of the 'last labourers revolt'. Because the targets were the bodies of fellow exploited workers, rather than the property of the elite, these incidents received far less attention at the time, and by subsequent historians. Nevertheless, they illustrate well that 'class consciousness' and the 'moral economy' were sharply fractured along the lines of nation and race, and that, as Marx and Engels observed a few decades later, antagonism predominantly characterised the relationship between the English and Irish working classes.[70] In this way, the primacy of English claims over land, labour, capital and thus, the colonial effects of the Union between Britain and Ireland, reached across the entire social spectrum of Kentish society.

iv. 'Insurrection' and 'Irishness'

Economic distress, market forces and the perceived decline of 'yeoman society' alone, cannot explain representations of 'Irishness' in Kent. They were also contingent upon endlessly reiterated stories of covert agrarian violence and the rise of O'Connell and the Catholic Association. These became increasingly prevalent in the Kentish press, and in other political rhetoric, throughout the 1820s. Reporting of the Catholic Association and of unrest in Ireland emphasised the unruly, insurrectionary nature of the Irish character.

In the early part of the decade, unrest in Ireland warranted intermittent mentions in the Kentish press, itself in the process of becoming the opinionated force it would

[70] Marx and Engels described 'national antagonism' as 'one of the main impediments in the way of every attempted movement for the emancipation of the working class, and therefore one of the mainstays of class dominion in England as well as in Ireland', Karl Marx, & Freidrick Engels, *Marx and Engels on Ireland* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 1.

be by 1830. Secret Societies, Ribbon-men, and particularly Captain Rock, were dropped in as items of occasional, but distant, interest.[71] Even the return of the West Kent Militia from Ireland in 1816, where they had been deployed to 'keep the peace', warranted little comment.[72] Moreover, romanticised images of the 'Emerald Isle' were reproduced in ballads and poems, which celebrated, for example, Wellington as the 'genius of Erin', and the beauties of Ireland on the occasion of the King's visit in 1821.[73] A more sustained coverage of happenings in Ireland began to emerge in the Kentish press around 1823, a year of desperation and poverty for the Irish poor, and of the foundation of the Catholic Association. The various issues concerning Ireland were increasingly linked, although the bias in column inches was consistently towards covert violence rather than other political intent. In the months following the formation of the Catholic Association, the *Kent Gazette*, for example, showed an increasing interest in Ireland, yet the focus was on conflicts between Dragoons and 'Ribbandmen', the destruction of machinery, and, once again, Captain Rock.[74] The weekly reporting of 'outrages' in Ireland became something of an ironic joke to James Cutbush at the *Maidstone Gazette*, who, in February 1830, decided to amalgamate his weekly roundup of the Irish news, about Rock, murder, robbery, abduction and joyful violence, into a rather droll poem.[75] Although the people of Kent, as elsewhere, joined their names to subscription lists

[71] Examples included *MJKA*, 14/3/1820; *KG*, 21/5/1821, 25/12/1821, 1/2/1822, 11/2/1823 (Rock) 22/7/1823, 29/7/1823 (destruction of Cork paper mill), 23/9/1825, 11/1/1825 (Rock letter); *MGKC* 14/5/1822.
[72] *KG*, 24/5/1816.
[73] *KG*, 18/7/1815, 26/3/1816, 14/9/1821.
[74] *KG*, 16/5/1823, 11/7/1823, 27/7/1823, 29/7/1823, 23/8/1823.
[75] *MGKC*, 16/2/1830. This lengthy verse was derived from passages taken from Irish newspapers. A typical verse ran: 'Last night a Rockite party crossed the water/ and forcibly took off Pat Murthagh's daughter;/ 'Tis thought they meant towards Bantry to escort her, and there be married. - from the *Cork Reporter*'.

to alleviate Irish 'famine', the *Maidstone Gazette* surmised that the distress in Ireland had a lot to do with the recent 'insurrection' of its people.[76]

Subscriptions bolstered the construction of the Irish as an object of charity, and of sisterly pity and protection, while accounts of Irish crimes constructed them as rebellious, and fostered suspicions of ingratitude. This, in turn, coloured perceptions of the increasingly numerous visiting Irish. When Irish hop-pickers were accused of being reticent in their efforts to put out a destructive fire at one of the properties of James Ellis, their behaviour was viewed in light of events in their own country and Kentish people's 'paternalistic' relationship to it, as recently demonstrated. The *Gazette* commented that they '...should have thought that gratitude alone would have prompted...their assistance as such a perilous time'.[77] The image of Ireland as an ungrateful, rebellious child was thus established.

Daniel O'Connell was crucial in English constructions of 'Irishness'. A lawyer and a landed gentleman, he was a brilliant and highly charismatic orator and could command the crowds at 'monster meetings' with ease. His image did not remotely conform to the picture of living in a mud hut, or begging for a living. Rather than evoking a discourse of 'racialised' difference, argued Foster, representations of O'Connell pivoted on religion and politics, while 'simianised' representations of Irish labourers were not so different from those of the English poor.[78]

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[76] *MGKC,* 21/5/1822.
[77] *MJKA*, 24/9/1822.
[78] For a discussion of the intersection of representations of the Irish with religious, race, class and politics from the 1840s onwards, see Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English*

Representations of O'Connell were ambiguous, to say the least. He moved uneasily in and out of favour with English 'radicals' and 'reformers'. With William Cobbett he had a famous love-hate relationship, as they concurred and clashed on various political issues. Both denigrated the other's character in times of animosity.[79] His passionate oratorical style was a trait that particularly signified his origins as a 'wild Irishman'.[80] In Kent, John Chalk Claris chose to dissect the character of O'Connell in the *Kent Herald* following the Irish leader's exclusion from Parliament after the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Bill in July 1829. While Claris supported O'Connell on this occasion, and even described him as one of the 'Spirits of the age', he also commented on the wildness and vulgarity of his speech and actions.[81] The Tory press consistently demonised O'Connell, betraying a deep fear of his underlying power: that he could, if pressed, unleash the power of the populace.[82] The Irish peasantry were a 'passive instrument' in his hands, which could be

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History, 174-178. For an example of how O'Connell and other parliamentary 'repealers' were seen as of 'lower-class' origins than their English counterparts in parliament, despite being their financial equals, see Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Great Dan. A Biography of Daniel O'Connell* (London: Jonathan Cope Ltd, 1984), 215-216.

[79] After one disagreement, O'Connell described the characters of Cobbett and Henry Hunt as 'despicable' and marked by 'vile jealousies', Oliver McDonagh, *The Hereditary Bondsman, Daniel O'Connell 1775-1829* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1988), 262.

[80] C. Hall, '*The Rule of Difference*', 115. Hall argues that 'O'Connell's masculinity was crucial to his leadership for the power of the association rested on the fear that it generated, the fear of violence, of a people armed, of the anarchy of the Ribbonmen being displaced by a much more widespread mobilisation'. See also, Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation*, 14-15. Several pamphlets from the later 1820s comment upon O'Connell's character, and his 'wildness'. B.O'Neil described O'Connell as 'superficial, ostentatious and destitute of the guidance of judgment', blamed for stirring up the 'poor Irish', in, *A letter to Daniel O'Connell on the Absurdity of his Claims* (London: T. Allen, 1828), 13, USSC Wellington Pamphlets 945/1; Robert Collins Andrews described O'Connell as talented but, by insulting as he pleases in his oratory, he 'sinks from a social to a savage state of society, and should be treated by all men as an uncivilised savage', *A letter to the right Hon Robert Peel on the prevention of the free entry into Ireland of popery and priestcraft* (London: 1828), 8, USSC Wellington Pamphlets 945/6.

[81] *KH*, 9/7/1828.

[82] *MGKC*, 29/7/1828.

wielded to his will '...the bare contemplation of which', commented the *Maidstone Gazette*, 'makes every good and peaceable subject shudder'.[83]

Nevertheless, the most vicious portraits in the Kentish press subverted O'Connell's class origins to his 'Irishness', notably around the peak of the Emancipation Crisis in 1828 when the *Kent Gazette* intervened in a dispute between the leader of the Catholic Association and Henry Hunt. Hunt, although also reviled by the Tory *Gazette* and from a humbler background than O'Connell, could 'put on the appearance (and) language of the gentleman when he pleases', but not O'Connell.

> Dan is blackguardism personified: sprang from the depths of the people, associated with the lowest and vilest of the Irish mob...Hunt must have had a rather difficult job to have blackened Dan's character more effectively than he has done it himself – black as a Moor, the task would have been to have whitened him...we take him to be a 'species of animal'.[84]

This passage indicates that the Irish *were* sometimes perceived as explicitly racially different. It is O'Connell's 'character', not his skin, which is 'black as a moor', yet the suggestion is that 'whitening' him is impossible. The 'bestialization' of O'Connell - a 'species of animal' - is clear enough. Although this 'racialised' construction of O'Connell himself was rare, Ireland's insurrectionary activities encouraged comparisons of its people to colonised subjects of Empire elsewhere, including those whose 'differences' were signified by the colour of their skin as well as their 'savagery'. According to the *Maidstone Gazette* in 1828, 'every day

[83] *MGKC*, 29/7/1828.
[84] *KG*, 26/9/1828.

brings forth some occurrence in that unhappy Ireland that would almost induce one to believe that the people are as savage as the inhabitants of the wilds of Africa'. O'Connell's 'hordes' carried out slaughter '...with all the cruel delights of the savages of New Zealand – women too joined in the bloody sacrifice'.[85]

The *Kent Herald* included lengthy musings on the racial origins of the Irish, once again understood as an unclear mixture of religious and developmental and racial difference. Discussing the Waterford election in 1826, for example, the *Herald* pondered this very question: 'we shall not attempt to inquire whence this material and martial temperament proceeds – whether from the alleged Oriental descent - from overindulgence in potatoes and whisky – or from the stimulus of persecution ...'. The conclusion erred upon the side of 'developmental' difference, a compelling model of racial difference in early nineteenth-century thinking.[86] The violence and partisanship of the Irish was identified in the English of the past, something that had now been stamped out in the eastern parts of the islands by the progress of 'civilisation'. Kindness and concessions were considered the best way to 'civilise' the Irish, although it was considered that the provocation of tyrannical landlords, such as the Beresfords, would 'make Rockites of us all'.[87]

The *Herald*, of course, supported Emancipation.[88] However, in a shift analogous to the changes in metropolitan public opinion after the abolition of slavery, the paper's

[85] *MGKC*, 24/6/1828.
[86] Luke Gibbon, 'Race against time', in C. Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire*, 208-209.
[87] *KH*, 12/7/1826.
[88] *KH*, 9/10/1828, 23/10/1828, 6/11/1828.

attitude to the Irish hardened when the stories of 'insurrection' continued after the passing of Catholic Emancipation.[89] Another discussion of the Irish race was found in 1831, next to an account of a parliamentary intervention of Daniel O'Connell, consisting of a lengthy comment on the recently revised work, 'Memorial on behalf of the native Irish'.[90] The author of this esteemed work had just revisited the 'Emerald Isle' after a previous sojourn in 1815, whence he had estimated that two million people spoke with the 'Irish tongue'. Now he estimated there were three million, leading the *Herald's* reviewer to reflect on the sensational thought of 'three millions of Hottentots, not in a distant colony, but in the heart of the British Empire. The article went on to comment: '...they are a colony of barbarians, such as we would expect to find on the banks of the Wolga, but to us growing and spreading in a country that boasts of its civilisation'. It was still hoped that these 'savages' could be saved by education to counteract 'ignorance and prejudice'.[91]

The association between 'Irishness' and a primitive culture of violence was exemplified during the 'Swing' riots when parallels were drawn between the Kentish insurgents and the Irish. The stories headed 'Outrages', which had so long been dedicated to Ireland, now ominously preceded accounts of local happenings, where the late riots had converted England into 'something resembling an English Munster'.[92] As Captain Swing notes began to emerge, the Kentish press joined its

[89] Christine Bolt 'Race and the Victorians' in C.C. Eldridge, ed., *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1984).
[90] Christopher Anderson, *Memorial on Behalf of the Native Irish, with a view to their improvement in moral and religious knowledge, through the medium of their own language* (London: Gale and Co, 1815). No copy of the 1831 reprint has been detected.
[91] *KH*, 13/5/1831.
[92] *MJKA*, 19/10/1830.

metropolitan counterparts in observing the parallel with Captain Rock. There was little mention of any inheritance from Captain Ludd, but then it was Rock and his agrarian 'outrages', not Ludd, who had long been a favourite bogeyman in the Kentish Press.[93] A correspondent wrote to the *Maidstone Gazette* that 'the wrath of Captain Rock was never more dreadful in Ireland than the 'evil eye' of these midnight deprecators is to the Kentish farmer', further lamenting that these happenings were 'derogatory' to the reputation of the 'Men of Kent'.[94] The rioters certainly found no sympathy from the 'romantic radicalism' of Claris at the *Herald*, who also condemned the behaviour of the Kent rioters as comparable to the Irish, and picked up on the parallels between Rock and Swing. Indeed, he reprinted a passage from one of the London papers that compared Swing unfavourably to his Irish counterpart: 'Swing is not so well instructed as Rock: the epistles of Rock used to be better spelt'.[95] Similar parallels were drawn by contemporary observers, and interpreters of the riots, including a pamphleteer who wrote '...I believe him (Swing) to have been a native born Englishman; nevertheless I know, as a fact, that he had many relations in Ireland by the name of Rock...'. His propensity for machine breaking had been learned from friends in northern industrial towns, but incendiarism, seen as a far more heinous crime, was strictly an Irish inheritance.[96]

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[93] *MJKA*, 22/9/1829.
[94] *MGKC*, 19/10/1830.
[95] *KH*, 21/10/1830, 4/11/1830. Monju Dutt observed that, according to the *KH*, 'an English equivalent of Irish agrarian terrorism was in operation', M.Dutt, 'The Agricultural Labourers Revolt of 1830 in Kent, Surrey and Sussex', unpublished University of London PhD Thesis (1966), 345.
[96] Anonymous, *A short account of the life and death of Swing the rick burner. Written by one well acquainted with him. Together with the confession of Thomas Goodman, now under sentence for death in Horsham jail for rick burning* (London, 1831).

Comparisons between the English labouring poor, when insurrectionary, and other subjects of Empire were not limited to the Irish, particularly in the eyes of pamphleteers who were not directly connected with the unrest. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a great proponent of Empire, equated the experience of agricultural labourers to that of slavery, and attributed their protests to an awakening to the knowledge 'of their own debasement'.[97] Meanwhile, an anonymous pamphlet 'respecting the causes of the late riots', compared the English and Scottish labourers favourably, in terms of education, with the 'savages' of the 'South Seas', and the Irish. Like Wakefield, the cruelty of landlords was considered partly to blame, but education and Christianity were seen as the ultimate solution by which the labourers would realise that insurrection was not the best way to effect change.[98]

Conversely, while the Irish could be imagined as at a previous stage of 'civilisation' to the English, they could also be perceived as a worrying mirror image, or forecast of the future, for agrarian southern England – a belief held by both William Cobbett and Thomas Law Hodges.[99] In his later writings especially, Cobbett used Ireland as an example of what could happen to England if capitalist

[97] C.Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 28-29; Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *Swing Unmasked or, The Causes of Rural Incendiarism* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1830), 17.
[98] Anonymous, *Observations respecting the causes of the late riots* (London: 1831).
[99] Luke Gibbon has suggested that defining the Irish presented a problem for the English in the nineteenth century, as they were both 'native' people and 'white', a contradiction in terms and colonial order. This accounts for the deeply troubled depictions of 'Irishness', which adopted a 'model of racism' different from those used to define 'black' colonised people. The 'wild Irish' were depicted as at a different period of developmental time to the civilised English. Gibbon, 'Race against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History', C.Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire*, 208-9. This is interesting in the agrarian English context around 1830. While the Irish were perceived as at a different stage of development, their plight was also seen as a possible, and unwanted, *future* for the English.

landlords were allowed to dominate or, an option more evil still, if free-traders and Whig 'Reformers', or the Scotch Lawyers, had their way with English trade and the New Poor Law.[100] Once again, the symbolism of food underpinned conceptions of difference: the English labourer, was not to be robbed of his beef and bread, and forced to eat meagre potatoes, like the pitiful Irish.[101] Therefore, framed in an imperial mindset and inflected along the lines of class, differences between the 'English' and the 'Irish' were in the forefront of Kentish interpretations of the unrest of 1830 and of the wider economic tribulations of the period.

3. Anti-Catholicism and Evangelicalism

i. The Catholic 'Other'

Differences between the English and the Irish, their European rivals, and colonised people, were also articulated along the lines of religion, and closely related conceptions of national characters and political systems. Conceptions of Frenchness and the European 'Other' betrayed the centrality of religion, particularly Anglican Protestantism, in the articulation of Kentish identities. In the eyes of the 'county community', Kent was not just Protestant, but decidedly Anglican.[102] With no large-scale Catholic population of any wealth or status, and only a moderate non-conformist presence, Anglican supremacy was largely unchallenged by any sea-change in religious worship. Although Anglican evangelicalism and missionary

[100] *CPR*, 11/10/1834, 18/10/1834. See also Molly Townsend, *Not by Bullets or Bayonets* (London: Stead and Ward, 1983), 97.
[101] *CPR*, 22/1/1831. Conversely, George McCluskey of Baronstown, Leinster, told Poor Law Commissioners about one of his 'men's' responses to Cobbett's attitude to food, illustrating the 'Englishness' of the 'radical's' ideas. The man had replied 'I never dined in my life without potatoes (but once), and that was in England, and though I got white bread and roast beef, I did not think I had dined'. PP 1830, Poor Law Ireland (7), vol. II, appendix A, 102.
[102] See ch. 2.2.ii.

societies were increasingly popular with the men and women of the 'county community', no major challenge to structure and forms of worship was levied until the end of this period, with the early efforts of the Oxford Movement. Debates surrounding the Emancipation Crisis brought these implicit religious elements of Kentish identities under the spotlight, causing the Catholic 'Other', to become particularly visible.

A resonant landscape of knowledge about the Catholic 'Other', and related conceptions of despotism and femininity, characterising both peoples and governments, were evoked by the meetings, press, propaganda and petitioning campaigns that stirred unprecedented levels of political activity at the time of the Emancipation Crisis. 1828 and 1829 saw a circulation of vast numbers of anti-Catholic horror stories, which drew upon imaginings of national character and 'difference'. This was a feature of all the Kentish newspapers, notably the *Maidstone Journal*, edited by devout evangelical, John Vine Hall, and James Cutbush's *Maidstone Gazette*. Hall regularly attended evangelical meetings and was the author of *'Sinner! This little book is for you!'* This self-confident 'little book' had run to twenty-four editions and claimed to have sold one hundred and ten thousand copies worldwide by 1836.[103] With its mission to 'save the souls' of even the most depravedly poor, it related incidents of its success on the inside of its cover. It was translated into several languages, including Tahitian.[104] Hall's religious zeal, a stridently Protestant one, was illustrated in the many lengthy reports his journal

[103] J.V.Hall, *Sinner! This Little Book is for You!* (Maidstone: J.V. Hall, 1836), preface.
[104] J.V.Hall, *Sinner's Friend. Tahitien. Te Hoa no te Taata Hara.* Translated into Tahitian by John Williams (Maidstone: J.V. Hall, 1836).

devoted to accounts of the meetings of missionary and other religious societies and in the draconian stance his paper adopted against Catholic Emancipation.

The Catholic 'Other' was variably of French, Spanish, Italian or Irish origin. Compared with the sturdy, manly and Protestant 'Men of Kent', they were imbued with 'frenchified' feminine wiles, in turn weak and impressionable, and backstabbing and heathen. Perpetuators of the crimes of the Catholic faith often *were* female. Letters printed in Maidstone newspapers in the early months of 1829, portrayed Catholics primarily as young girls, usually domestic servants: un-enlightened, impressionable, dependent and easily led astray by evil priests. A typical European Catholic villain was an 'Italian girl', who turned to the underhand crime of poisoning, to rid the world of an 'English lady' and her children, who she had secretly baptised into the Catholic faith in their dying moments to ensure the 'eternal salvation' of their souls.[105] The lurid details of such stories foreshadowed the mid-Victorian 'horror stories' of murderous nuns and their violated victims, such as Maria Monk.[106]

The association between Catholicism, un-English traits and femininity, was also manifested as hostility to 'despotic' and 'petticoat politics'. For example, the *Maidstone Gazette* suspected that the King and his ministers must have come under 'female influence' to even consider concessions to Catholics, pleading that: 'we

[105] *MGKC,* 6/12/1829; *MJKA,* 3/2/1829.
[106] Anonymous, *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk as Exhibited in a Narrative of her Sufferings* (New York: Howe and Bates, 1836). This lurid work proved very popular, running to several editions in London in the 1850s. See also Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian Britain,* 1, 64-75.

will not so wrong our most Gracious Sovereign as to believe that he has consented that the web and woof of the nation's greatness shall be cut asunder by the scissors of a woman'. Nevertheless, suggest this they did.[107] Less than a month later, just before the first reading of the Bill in the Commons, the same paper devoted well over a page to an account of what England would become, a century into the future in 1929, if the legislation were to be passed. Corrupt female power is everywhere. A Queen Mary is on the throne, guided by Spanish and Italian monarchs and the Pope. She is enthusiastically burning Protestants as heretics. Misguided, fervent and devious women have violated the public spaces at the very heart of London, as it is noted: 'We hear that the Covent Garden Nunnery in London is to be enlarged'. Women are even bringing debauchery to the public theatres. In an imaginary review of a production of 'The Temptation of St. Anthony' on the London stage, readers are told: 'The Devils were played *divinely*, the *female nude* received much applause for the *chasteness* of her acting'.[108] 'Popery' was thus portrayed as treacherously feminine, genuinely 'menacing' and 'ready to seize the reigns of the British Government...'.[109]

Anti-Catholicism gained in strength in the 1820s as a reaction to political events and the happenings in Ireland, and peaked in 1829, but it was far from new, as well-established traditions such as 'Fifth of November' commemorations demonstrate. The scale of 'celebration' that took place on 'Guy Fawkes' night at this time, as in

[107] *MGKC*, 10/2/1829.
[108] *MGKC*, 3/3/1829.
[109] *MJKA*, 3/2/1829.

many other periods, was indicated by the records of nasty, fire-related accidents.[110] The Emancipation Crisis, however, gave such traditions new impetus. For example, on the eve of Guy Fawkes Night, 1828, a fortnight after Penenden Heath, an extraordinary act of violence was incited among a group of six boys in Maidstone, who had constructed an effigy of the Pope to be burned the next day. Confusion ensued when one asked another to 'remember the Pope', apparently meaning for his companion to remember to bring it to the event. According to court testimony, the second boy took the first's meaning to be a term of respect for the Roman Catholic pontiff, and proceeded to attack him violently with a knife, saying: 'You little villain, who do you belong to?'[111] Although not always quite so sensational, at this moment of high tension, it did not have to be the fifth of November for the performance of anti-Catholic ritual. Maidstone M. P. John Wells reported that on returning to his 'own place' in early March 1829, he found that the 'excitement produced in the county of Kent' had prompted people to assemble in a public place and 'burn in effigy an advocate of the Roman Catholic claims'.[112] Besides these rather extreme outpourings of feeling, the scare stories made good and probably prevalent gossip, even if it can only be retrieved through the accounts of those who chose to denigrate it, such as the *Morning Chronicle's* roving reporter for the Penenden Heath meeting. He related: 'The old ignorant cook at the Bull Inn (Rochester) poured her blessings on the 'Brunswickers' as they departed, and hoped 'they would not allow the Catholics to carry the day; for if they did she

[110] *MJKA,* 11/11/1828.
[111] Maidstone Assizes, CKS Q/SBE, December 1828.
[112] John Wells, Commons, 16/4/1829, *Hansard*, New Series, vol. 22, 1086.

feared that instead of roasting joints of mutton and of beef, she would be roasted herself by that day week, by the Catholics'.[113]

Religious 'difference' was also formulated along lines of race and ethnicity. Much knowledge of race in this period was formulated through the dissemination of knowledge about the subjects of Empire by missionary associations. Missionary discourses, often articulated through the campaigns against slavery, understood relationships between the different 'races' of Empire as 'familial'. These formed the basis of relatively benign conceptions of 'difference', distinguished by an optimism that all could eventually be saved through Christianity and 'civilisation'.[114] Amongst the Kent 'county community', organisations such as the Kent Church Missionary Society (hereafter KCMS) and the Kent Bible Society, and their subsidiaries, increased in number and activity in the 1820s. In their 'world views', the 'differences' between the 'English' and their Imperial subjects, including the Irish, and particularly the Catholic Irish, were partially understood through this style of religious and 'civilising' gaze. This general mission was applied to the 'poor' at home, as well as 'the Indians, the Esquimaux, the Islanders of the South Seas, and in short from every part of the world'.[115] However, amongst the predominantly Anglican 'county community', to whom Protestantism was a central tenet of identity, anti slavery stirred relatively little interest, and much more

[113] *Morning Chronicle,* 25/10/1828.
[114] C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects,* 87-88; Midgely, 'Anti-slavery and the roots of Imperial Feminism' in Midgely ed., *Gender and Imperialism.*
[115] Kent Auxiliary Bible Society, *MGKC,* 11/9/1827.

weight was placed upon the 'threat' of Catholicism.[116] Thus European Catholics, as well as colonised peoples, became the subjects of conversion, and Irish Catholics, visible within the county borders of Kent, and the national borders of Great Britain, were a particular target to be 'saved', both materially and spiritually, by their conversion to Protestantism.

ii. The Evangelical Campaign.

There was much slippage between the political campaigns against Catholic Emancipation, and religious campaigns to convert Catholics to Protestants. On the most basic level, the personnel involved in the religious crusade against Catholicism, and political opposition to Emancipation, overlapped. Winchilsea, Knatchbull, J.P.Plumptre, and many of the speakers on Penenden Heath, were also prominent members of evangelical associations and, on occasions, professed deeply religious motivations for their actions.[117] The leaders of evangelical societies included the ranks of the clergy, Anglican and Methodist, who had flocked in such prodigious numbers to Penenden Heath and organised much of the petitioning campaign.[118] Nevertheless, the superficial division between the religious and political aspects of the campaigns allowed women, predominantly excluded from political organisations, to bolster the ranks of the evangelical societies. Their

[116] Anti-slavery was not a compelling issue in Kent until after 1830, and even then he did not attract the attention that it did in London, Birmingham and other nonconformist industrial centres. Members of some Kent evangelical organisations were slave owners, and leading members of the 'county community', including Winchilsea and Knatchbull, supported slavery. Anti-slavery campaigns did take hold until the early 1830s, in separate organisations. For example, an anti-slavery meeting, chaired by Lord Barham and supported, in absence, by Thomas Law Hodges and Thomas Rider, was held in April 1833 in the Town Hall, Maidstone. It won the approval of John Vine Hall, *MJKA*, 16/4/1833.
[117] See chs. 7.2.iv and 7.3.iii.
[118] R.L.Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political*, 203.

enthusiastic participation, alongside their involvement in petitioning, indicates the level of female involvement in the campaigns surrounding the Emancipation Crisis, and in the formulation of notions of 'Englishness' and 'Otherness' in Kent.

Catholics, in general, were imagined as at an inferior stage of moral and educational development from English Protestants. Alongside the stories of the 'heathens', 'Jews' and 'Muhammedans' were those about the need to convert the 'Roman Catholics', whose practices were argued to be every bit as 'idolotorous' and superstitious as those of non-Christians, and the people themselves just as much 'estranged from Christ'.[119] The needs of Catholic and non-Christian groups, could be spoken about more or less in the same breath. For example, a former missionary to the south-west Coast of India told the KCMS in 1827 of the challenges facing him when he discovered a Syrian Catholic church had existed there since the fifteenth century. He was charged with the conversion of a population of two million, 'many of whom are Mohammedans, about 100,000 Roman Catholics, and the remainder Idolators'.[120] The subject of discussion could flit fairly easily from concerns about Catholicism in general, to anxieties about heathenism and morality. The Reverend Tucker, also of the KCMS, saw the Irish as a priority in greatly wanting in education, morality and religiosity, even compared to certain groups of non-Christians, such as the Jews.[121]

[119] KCMS, *MJKA*, 10/7/1829.
[120] *MJKA*, 21/7/1827.
[121] *MJKA*, 21/7/1827.

With the press filled with stories of Irish violence, evocative accounts of any success of the Protestant mission to 'save' Ireland from Catholicism, were particularly resonant to the evangelicals and gave a glimmer of hope that the dark threat of Ireland was something they could control. A Kent Bible Society meeting in September 1829 heard from a missionary sent by the society to Sligo, who discovered in an 'immense glen...almost dark, in consequence of the overhanging rocks and trees', a young man 'not very conversant with literature' in a hut lighted with 'pieces of pine sticks which are found in the bogs and which were stuck in the sides of the mud wall'. He was reading to nineteen others from the gospel of St. John. The visitors were welcomed after initial suspicion, and the Kent Bible Society were told that these people, living in the throes of poverty, wanted to talk and hear '...not about Catholic Emancipation! (applause), not about the poverty and miseries of their country, but to hear of Jesus Christ and his gospel (loud applause)'.[122] Stories about Ireland also dominated the 1828 meeting of the Rochester and Chatham Branch Bible Society, where the company, 'consisting principally of ladies', had their attention directed immediately on arrival to Ireland. The speaker, the Reverend James Graham, was 'sure that the sun of righteousness which now streaks the horizon of that country with its light, shall rise to meridian splendour'. The attentive females were then told of the spirit of enquiry that had turned many away from 'heathen darkness'. Once again, the imagery was brought alive by an emotive story of the 'sister country', this time the tale of a 'poor' Irish woman, who begged her priest for the *right* version of the Bible to be given to her. When he would only give her one, which omitted the second commandment,

[122] *MJKA*, 8/9/1829.

claiming it was too long to be included, she turned in desperation to the version given by a Protestant clergyman. This finally 'satisfied her mind' and 'in short, she renounced the errors of popery, and joined the Protestant church'.[123] The ladies applauded as hope sparked that, even among the poverty, gloom, and bogs, the Irish were redeemable!

At the moment the 'political' crusade against Catholicism failed, the 'religious' and moral crusade to 'save' the souls of the 'poor benighted Irish', as well as the more confrontational campaign to curb their corruptive influence, moved to a new level, with the visiting hop pickers as the easiest and most obvious target.[124] The late spring and summer of 1829 saw a new flurry of interest in societies devoted to the education of the Irish, particularly appealing to women of the middle and upper classes. This included the Sunday School Society for Ireland, a meeting for which was held in September at the Guildhall, Rochester. It was attended by many ladies who were 'highly delighted with the addresses which were delivered on behalf of the poor inhabitants of Ireland, many of whom are totally destitute of knowledge of the Scriptures'.[125] The Reverend G. Harker took the chair, for what he saw as a most Christian and patriotic motive, to 'inspire love for the long neglected people of Ireland'. Recent atrocities illustrated the particular need '...for instruction....Had we earlier done our duty, he was persuaded that the murders and excesses which

[123] *MJKA*, 8/7/1828.
[124] John Wolffe has argued that the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act provoked increasing anti-Catholicism. I am suggesting that it also provoked shifts in related attitudes to the Irish poor, Wolffe, *Protestant Crusade*, 1-2, 53-64.
[125] *MJKA*, 28/7/1829.

now stained our reports from Ireland would not have been half as numerous as they were'.[126]

iii. The Reformation Society

In August 1827, Maidstone became the first provincial town to set up its own auxiliary Reformation Society, completely devoted to the moral reformation and conversion to Protestantism of Irish Catholics, in Ireland, and in England. Captain James Edward Gordon had formed the national organisation of the 'British Society for promoting the Religious Principles of the Reformation', at a meeting in Freemasons Hall, London, the previous May. He was motivated by a desire to preach about the evils of Rome, and to respond to the increased militancy of the Catholic Association in Ireland.[127] Winchilsea was a close associate and supporter of Gordon and his beliefs, and he had been involved in the initial setting up of the parent society. George Finch, Winchilsea's cousin and the natural son of the previous Earl of Winchilsea, was also one of Gordon's most prominent activists.[128]

The Kent Auxiliary Reformation Society, like the parent society, differentiated their mission from that of the other, more generic missionary societies, and also from the relief associations, such as the Hibernian Bible Society and the Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor in Ireland. Their agendas were to alleviate some of the hardship of the Irish people, and spread the word of the scripture, of

[126] *MJKA*, 28/7/1829.
[127] John Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade,* 32-35.
[128] John Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade,* 32-35. See also British Society for Promoting the Religious Principles of the Reformation, Annual Reports 1818-1835, BL.

which Catholics were widely believed to be ignorant.[129] The explicit agenda of the Reformation Society was to improve the moral condition of the Irish, which they perceived to be in a very 'base' state, by making a link between Catholicism and moral depravity, and between Protestantism and moral and spiritual virtue: in other words, to 'tell the Romanist that he was wrong'.[130] Drinking and violence were also closely tied to Catholic ritual. Concerns were voiced about pilgrimages to 'holy wells' or 'holy stones', culminating in drunken brawls and revelries, a 'striking feature of the moral character of peasantry in Ireland...'.[131]

Through the visiting Irish harvesters, echoes of Ireland's troubles were to be found within Kent's own borders. Right from the first meeting, the members of the Reformation Society were reminded that: 'Charity ought to begin at home, and there is a great number of poor Irishmen in this country'.[132] By the hop-picking season of 1828, the Reformation Society in Kent were embarked upon a two-pronged campaign, aimed at providing pamphlets and scripture readers to the illiterate Catholics of Ireland, and the itinerate harvesters of Kent. Two scripture readers were employed locally, through the aid of an independent fund'. The result had been 'very encouraging'. Once unleashed upon the 'poor hop pickers', the readers had found: 'very grateful and attentive hearers; and one effect has been, that upwards of 150 testaments were purchased at reduced prices – many by Irish, some

[129] First meeting of the Kent Auxiliary Reformation Society, *MGKC*, 7/8/1827.
[130] *MJKA*, 10/6/1828.
[131] *MGKC*, 7/8/1827.
[132] *MGKC*, 7/8/1827.

by Roman Catholics'.[133] At the start of the harvest in 1829, the *Maidstone Journal* printed A PLEA FOR THE HOP PICKERS, suggesting that Catholic hop-pickers from Ireland and London were sent to Kent for the inhabitants to perform their providential duty. Employers were urged to purchase tracts to circulate to their employees, and told that if they could not afford them, they should apply to the Reformation Society through John Vine Hall. The plea was repeated later in the season, and reprinted in a very similar form in the papers in 1830.[134]

At the society's annual meeting in 1829 it was reported that the Bibles and tracts circulated among the Irish Catholics the previous hop season had done 'much good'. The journal of one of the men employed to read the literature to the hop-pickers at Barming and East Farleigh (both near Maidstone) was referred to and the audience were told, 'he rarely met with incivility...they listened with respect and attention, and in some instances, especially among the sick, with apparently good effect'. The reader had ingratiated himself to labourers by sitting with them as they gathered about their open fires and ate their 'sparing' meals at the end of the day. It seemed that 'conversations of an improving tendency often naturally arose' at this stage, which was considered a matter of 'grateful reflection'. It was resolved that efforts should be increased for these people at the next harvest and that they should have 'an increased share of the committee's attention; shut out as they are from the ordinary meaning of instruction by migratory habits... spreading, as they annually

[133] Second Annual Report of the British Society for Promoting the Religious Principles of the Reformation, March 1828 to March 1829, 22-23, BL.
[134] A PLEA FOR THE HOP PICKERS respectfully addressed to their employers, *MJKA*, 28/8/1829.

do in their present degraded state, a moral pestilence throughout one of the *fairest* portions of our land'.[135]

Indeed, visitors addressing the Kent Societies often espoused an association between the providential virtues of the 'Men of Kent' and their fertile and beautiful countryside, to underline their peculiar role in the 'civilising mission'. Charles Stokes Dudley, of the parent Bible Society, reflected after having travelled through the 'beautiful country between Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone' and having 'observed the face of the country smiling under the genial beans of the sun, which promised to bring the fruits of the earth to perfection' that he believed 'surely the Men of Kent have need only of one thing. They have the fruits of the earth, have they also the fruit of the spirit'? Against this backdrop he urged the spread of the Bible to other places of beauty, to Spain, Italy and Turkey, which he argued lacked the spirit of Kent, despite their 'gifts of Providence': 'it requires more to excite gratitude, it requires the Bible'.[136]

4. Conclusion

The Irish, and conceptions of 'Irishness', were a significant focus in imaginings of 'Self' and 'Other' and in the formulation of 'difference' in Kent. These discourses were underpinned by economic circumstances, specifically the attraction and employment of itinerant Irish labourers, against the backdrop of domestic unrest, which influenced a wide region of rural and provincial southern England. They

[135] *MJKA*, 9/6/1829.
[136] Kent Bible Society, *MJKA*, 8/9/1829.

were also bolstered by militant Protestantism and anti-Catholicism, which had a particularly strong base in the political and evangelical societies of Kent, and vigorous support in the Kentish press.

'Differences' between the English and the Irish were understood through the lens of ethnicity: the Irish were culturally different, because of their Catholic religion and their perceived lower standards of morals and living. The Emancipation Crisis increased consciousness of religious difference, which itself could be constructed as ethnic and cultural difference: Catholicism symbolised moral depravity, a less 'civilised', un-English way of life, and a lack of true religion. The campaigns leading up to and the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act increased awareness of the 'differences' between Protestants and Catholics, and the English and the Irish, a cultural shift analogous to attitudes to race following the abolition of slavery. Itinerant Irish harvesters, whether as pilferers of work, or as immoral Irish Catholics, were the ultimate pollutant to the 'body politic' and compellingly 'different'. While, as Foster and Gilley have argued, class and religion were important in perceptions of difference between the English and Irish, the 'Othering' process took many forms, and the Irish could also be perceived as racially different. While their skins were not usually a prime signifier of their contrasting racial status to the 'Men of Kent', as subjects for conversion, improvement and 'civilisation', there were striking similarities between representation of the Irish, and that of colonised people of colour. Constructions of 'Irishness', therefore, shed light on the racial, ethnic as well as gendered underpinnings of Kentish identities.

Chapter Seven: Masculine Identities and Subjectivities

1. Introduction

This chapter explores the identities and subjectivities of several individuals who regarded themselves, at some point in their lives, as 'Men of Kent', starting with three men at the centre of the Kentish 'county community': The Earl of Winchilsea, Thomas Law Hodges and Sir Edward Knatchbull.

Hodges, like Knatchbull and Winchilsea, was a 'Man of Kent' and 'Country gentleman', identities to which all, at various stages of their lives, proudly confessed. Winchilsea presented himself as an iconic 'Man of Kent', particularly in the campaigns surrounding Catholic Emancipation.[1] Knatchbull's defence of 'Protestant Principles' in 1828/9 was seen as 'manly and uniformably steady'. To him was owed the gratitude of the 'staunch men of Kent'.[2] Hodges, on the other hand, was hailed by supporters of his 'independent', reforming stance as the 'Man of Kent' of the new era, standing for the greater representation of the agricultural interest and the sturdy Kentish 'yeoman'.[3] The second part of this chapter will examine the subjectivities of two 'Men of Kent' of a later generation: Charles Knatchbull, one of Sir Edward's younger sons, and Robert Cowton, a 'Man of Kent' from a rather different social background. He grew up among the middling classes of urban Canterbury.

[1] See ch. 5.2.iii.
[2] Thomas Austen to the Earl of Winchilsea, September 1829, Northamptonshire Record Office (hereafter NRO), FH 4616; see also, John Fogg 21/9/1829, NRO FH 4615; John Warde, 15/9/1829, NRO FH 4642; Robert Moneypenny, 13/9/1829, NRO FH 4622; Lord Mulcaster, 11/9/1829, NRO FH 4631; M.D.Dallison, 11/9/1829, NRO FH 4637.
[3] George Warde Norman, Notes for speech on the hustings at Maidstone, 31/8/1837. CKS, U310 F63/2.

Like all identities, that of the 'Men of Kent', and related ideas of 'militaristic' and 'yeoman'-style masculinities, influenced individuals' self-perceptions and behaviour. Nevertheless, there were many competing discourses of masculinity available. Forms of appearance and behaviour, which were acceptable in the boisterous sphere of Kentish political life, existed in tension with religious and personal beliefs about the role of men in the family, domestic life, and in 'respectable' metropolitan and middle-class 'public opinion'. This chapter, then, explores these men's self-perceptions, and the tensions inherent in their negotiation of complex and sometimes conflicting gender roles.

i. Men and Women of Letters

The personal lives of Knatchbull, Winchilsea, and many of the other prominent 'Men of Kent' can be accessed through the extensive letters and diaries of Jane Austen's kinship network, which encompassed around twenty gentry and aristocratic families based in Kent, Hampshire - where Jane's branch of the Austen/Knight clan now resided - and various other English counties. The core of this grouping being very much centred upon Kent, it also included the families of Clifton, Brockman, Deedes, Papillon, Oxenden, Fane and Rice.[4]

[4] Diary of Fanny Knatchbull (née Knight, hereafter FK), 6/10/1828, 16/5/1837, CKS U951/F24. The 8th baronet and his children married predominantly within the immediate family and kinship network, more so than previous generations, see Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Kentish Family*, appendices: Pedigrees II and III.

Austen's letter writing style was echoed by that of her nieces, Fanny Knatchbull and Elizabeth Rice, both of whom grew up in Kent and married into prominent county families.[5] Partially because of the limitations of the sphere to which their historically specific femininity restricted them, the many female, letter and diary writers of this circle give relatively minimal insight into the politics or wider society in which their husbands, sons and brothers participated. Although their writings hint at the underlying struggles of their everyday existence – childhood sickness was a prevalent trial – a relatively benign 'gloss' dominated: the writings of Jane Austen's female relatives, like her own, are saturated by gossip, balls, tea parties, and 'pretty little babies'.[6] They hint at their involvement in their husbands' lives. Fanny Knatchbull, for example, sympathised with her husband's busy schedule, but never communicated any depth of feeling over the issues that pushed her spouse into the depths of depression.[7] This does not mean these matters did not move her, but they never found their way into her, or many of the other female diarists, depictions of life – at least those that survived. Cassandra Austen, for example, censored and burned many of her sister's most intimate letters in the years

[5] Extracts of the Diary of Elizabeth Rice (born Austen-Knight) are published in M.C.Hammond, *Relating to Jane. Studies on the Life and Novels of Jane Austen, with the Life of her Niece Elizabeth Austen Knight* (London: Minerva, 1998).

[6] See for example, Diary of FK, 12/9/1828-14/9/1828; Journal of Matilda Twisden, 1831 (mainly undated), CKS U49/F76.

[7] Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Kentish Family*, 202. The non-confessional nature of Jane Austen's letters, and how she distanced herself from the letter as a medium for 'self scrutiny and self representation', has been discussed by Greg Laugero, 'Publicity, Gender, and Genre: A Review Essay', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1995), 435. See also Mary Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). There is, of course, a vast literature on the construction of femininity in Jane Austen's novels. See for example, Laura Mooneyham White ed., *Critical Essays on Jane Austen* (G.K. Hall & Co., 1998), and Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

following her death.[8] The remaining female writings do indicate, however, that masculine experience was defined by movement back and forth between the sphere of congeniality, country houses, afternoon visits, and balls, which was occupied by men and women, and the more stridently masculine world of hunting, clubs, political meetings and official county duties. For some, Parliament or careers in the military or Empire could take them away completely from the familial support networks that had dominated their early years.[9]

Despite the presence of one of the most admired novelists of all time, then, none of the female letter and diaries conveyed the intimate feelings of the diaries of Sir Edward Knatchbull, or the writings of his son, Charles Knatchbull, in India in 1836. That these men wrote down their feelings in such as way is revealing in itself, indicating the complex, sometimes contradictory, and evolving thoughts and feelings beneath the public faces of 'Men of Kent'. These men sat down to write when motivated by absence and change, and when the parameters of their everyday existence were challenged. The emotiveness of their writings can be partially attributed to situations in which these men were placed, far from their usual realms of experience, and in situations where the participation of the female members of their networks was unthinkable.[10] This was true of Edward and Charles Knatchbull, and Hodges wrote his only surviving (and possibly only) diary in 1798 when, aged

[8] Le Faye, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters*, xv.
[9] Diary of FK, 25/9/1828, 16/10/1828.
[10] There is relatively little work on men's diary and letter writing of this style in the early nineteenth century. Much work is focused on slightly later evangelical masculinities, and those of Carlyle's, 'men of letters' as hero. See, for example, Norma Clarke 'Strenuous Idleness: Thomas Carlyle and the Man of Letters as Hero' in Michael Roper and John Tosh eds. *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991).

twenty-one, he was posted to Ireland with the West Kent Militia. The unfamiliar and shocking sights and sounds of the poverty-stricken country, and its bloody conflicts, engendered a life-long fascination with the plight of Ireland, and its relation to Kent and England.

In their writings, at these moments of disruption, the meaning of home – often tied up with the notion of 'Old England', and the fortunes of the 'agricultural interest' – came sharply into focus. Another common theme was the military: professional or amateur soldiering was a pivotal part of all these men's lives. A final unifying factor was the conflicts between the inherently martial masculinities of the 'Men of Kent' and domestic and evangelical masculinities.[11] Religion was central to each of these individuals' self-perceptions - with the possible exception of Hodges - and presented conflicts with their conduct in county life, or even, in the case of Sir Edward Knatchbull, with himself, as he analysed his own conduct and feelings as a younger man.

2. The Iconic 'Man of Kent': The Earl of Winchilsea

i. Reputation

The first 'Man of Kent' to be considered was not a great diarist or letter writer. However, he was a man of such high profile that his conduct and speeches were much analysed and reflected upon in the writings of others. These bolster the picture gained from his own, rare epistles.

[11] For a full discussion of domestic and evangelical masculinities, see Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English masculinities, 1750-1850' in Hitchcock and Cohen eds., *English Masculinities, 1660-1800.*

Like many major landowners of the period, George Finch-Hatton, tenth Earl of Winchilsea and fifth Earl of Nottingham, entered into many different publics, in which varying codes of behaviour and forms of masculinities were dominant. These included the elite circles of London politics, the quasi-military world of the Volunteer Yeomanry, and the closely related arena of county politics in Kent. As an active member of many religious societies, including the Reformation Society and Church Missionary Society, he also participated in the vibrant and ardent world of evangelical Christianity. His first wife, Lady Georgiana Charlotte, eldest daughter of the Duke of Montrose, was an 'earnest disciple of the evangelical school of her day'.[12]

Mainstream political accounts and histories, however, paint a rather monolithic picture of Winchilsea. He never really ingratiated himself with London society, and was often pilloried for his stubborn 'bull-headedness' and his excesses of emotion. On the issue of Catholic Emancipation, passion and ardour overruled the sense of prudence that swayed Peel and Wellington, and he fought the bill to the bitter end.[13] His behaviour evoked little respect in Westminster. Charles Greville reflected sentiments elsewhere when he referred to Winchilsea in his diary as a

[12] G. C. Boase, 'Hatton, George William Finch, tenth Earl of Winchilsea and fifth earl of Nottingham (1791–1858)', Wolffe, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9447>

[13] For an account of Winchilsea's interactions with the Ultra Tory faction and the Duke of Wellington, see R.W. Davis, *The Duke of Wellington and the Ultra peers* in C.M. Woolger ed., *Wellington Studies III* (University of Southampton, 1999), 45; Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860*, 22-23; G.F.A.Best, 'The Protestant Constitution and its Supporters, 1800-1829', in *Transactions of the Royal History Society,* vol. 8 (1958), 105-27; Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics*, 133-155.

'blockhead'.[14] Similar derogatory accounts, along with those of Winchilsea himself and his friends, also attest to his rather over-emotional way of speaking and mannerisms, such as flourishing a white pocket-handkerchief when he spoke in parliament.[15] After one unfortunate misunderstanding in the Commons, it was reported that Winchilsea claimed he was '...in such a state of excitement that he did not know what he said and did'.[16] Winchilsea himself made such confessions, writing in his own hand to Camden that '...the truth really is that my feelings were so completely absorbed in the few observations I have made to the house that I entirely forgot your appointment until I had left London'.[17]

It would be easy to dismiss Winchilsea as an emotional fool or a 'fop', an outmoded figure by the 1820s, discredited by tropes of domesticity, independence and moderation.[18] But hints of so-called 'effeminacy' were not his only distinguishing feature. Indeed, to other observers, it was his untamed and loud way of speaking that was striking. Mrs Arbuthnot complained one night after a visit to

[14] Charles Greville, 4/4/1830, in Philip Whitwell Wilson ed., *The Greville Diary* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1927), 191. The Duke of Buckingham referred to Winchilsea's 'mental malady', Buckingham to Wellington, 6/4/1830, Wellington Papers, Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1008/27; William Carpenter described Winchilsea as 'foremost amongst the 'most forcible feebles', *Peerage for the People* (London: 1852); Ellenborough described Winchilsea as making a very 'foolish' speech about returning Catholic Priests and dissolving parliament', 10/3/1829, Lord Colchester ed., *Edward Law, Lord Ellenborough, A Political Diary,* In 2 Volumes (London, 1881), 387; Fitzgerald wrote that 'Lord Winchelsea may be mad or malignant, or both...' M.Fitzgerald to Wellington, 5/11/1830, Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1149/21. On a more positive note, fellow Ultra the Earl of Newcastle described him as 'an honest and excellent fellow', with 'the tête montée and all the chivalry of a Don Quixote', Newcastle Diary, 26/10/1828 and 10/2/1829, quoted in Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade*, 23.

[15] Winchilsea himself admitted to his friends that sometimes he was 'carried away' by his emotions. Winchilsea to Camden, 6/11/1830, Records of the East Kent Yeoman Cavalry, CKS EKY/AG2. At a meeting of Orangemen in Dublin he was alleged to have stated of himself that his '...feelings were so excited that he was deprived of what little intellect he possessed' - probably a misquote, Charles Greville, 19/8/1834, *The Greville Diary*, 192.

[16] Charles Greville, 19/8/1834, *The Greville Diary*, 192.

[17] Winchilsea to Camden, 6/11/1830, Records of the East Kent Yeomanry Cavalry, CKS, AG2.

[18] Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self,* 60-65; C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 27.

the House that she could hear him in the lobby. He always spoke, she observed, as if he was shouting at a mob on a windy day on Penenden Heath.[19] Yet this, indeed, was exactly where Winchilsea was most at home: addressing the 'Men of Kent'.

ii. Early Life

George William Finch-Hatton was the son of Mr George Finch-Hatton, a 'mere' Esquire of Eastwell Park in Kent, a fine mansion that had been in the possession of the family of the Earls of Winchilsea since the sixteenth century, and which Mr Finch-Hatton rebuilt, in a classical style, in the 1790s. The tenth Earl's uncle was Edward Finch-Hatton, the ninth Earl, who had no children in wedlock, and resided mainly at the families Northamptonshire seat, Kirby Hall.[20] Here, George junior was born and spent some of his childhood.[21] Not surprisingly, for the 'well-made' heir to an Earldom, Winchilsea was popular on the social scene, and with the ladies. In 1813, Fanny Knight reported 'all the young ladies are in love with George Hatton – he was very handsome and agreeable, danced very well, and flirted famously'. She further observed that he had 'quick feelings', but predicted that they 'would not kill him'.[22]

Indeed, George was an early infatuation of Fanny herself, leading her aunt Jane to scrutinize him in more detail. She reported he was: 'nothing extraordinary...a

[19] Mrs Arbuthnot, 12/3/1829, in Francis Banford and the Duke of Wellington eds., *The Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot,* vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1950), 252.
[20] The ninth Earl's 'natural' son was George Finch, a prominent member of the Reformation Society, and a close associate of the 10th Earl, Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain*, 37.
[21] C. Boase, 'Hatton, George William Finch', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*
[22] Diary of Fanny Knight, 1813, quoted in Edward, Lord Brabourne ed., *Letters of Jane Austen* (R. Bentley and Son, London, 1884), 124-5.

Gentlemanlike young man...heard him talk, saw him bow and was not in raptures'.[23] Winchilsea was later to marry Fanny's own niece, Fanny Margaretta Rice, in 1852. She was his third wife, twenty-nine years his junior.[24] Despite his popularity, however, George faced his own disappointments. He was greatly affected by a dalliance with the inappropriate Miss Wemyss, possibly the daughter of an army general, which apparently ended in heartbreak.[25]

As well as handling himself in the complex world of gossip and courtship, George took on the responsibilities of a Country Gentleman from an early age. He gained his first commission in the Kent Militia at the age of 18, and consequently led divisions of the Yeomanry Cavalry in both Kent and Northamptonshire.[26] He became deputy Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire in 1821.[27]

iii. The Iconic 'Man of Kent'

As leader of the Kent Brunswick Society in the late 1820s, and then as the Commander of the East Kent Yeomanry Cavalry in the 1830s, Winchilsea saw himself, and was perceived by others, as both the embodiment and the leader of the 'Men of Kent'. He played an important role in popularising, and establishing the 'Men of Kent' as a language of citizenship and masculinity in the era of Catholic

[23] Jane Austen (hereafter JA) to Cassandra Austen (hereafter CA), 26/10/1813, Le Faye ed., *Letters of Jane Austen,* 244-245.
[24] See M.C. Hammond, *Relating to Jane*, 219. The marriage lasted from 1850 to Winchilsea's death in 1858. They had four children.
[25] JA to CA, 14-15/10/1813, Le Faye ed., *Letters of Jane Austen*, 239.
[26] Records of the East Kent Yeomanry Cavalry, 1830, CKS EKY/AG2.
[27] *The Times*, 14/11/1821.

Emancipation and 'Reform'.[28] This role, bolstered by his 'sturdy' and 'manly' appearance and behaviour, coupled with his vast wealth and power, placed him at the peak of the hierarchies of the 'county community'. Kent's few radical papers on occasions derided him but he remained a remarkably popular figure. Even in the era of Swing, and the 'Reform' agitation immediately afterwards, he was seen by many as a man of the 'the people', declaring himself cautiously a 'reformer' at a county meeting in 1830 (he eventually voted against the Reform Bill).[29] As part of the Country Party, he introduced measures to parliament that he thought would improve the situation of tenants and labourers, although these predictably involved reinforcing hierarchies and upholding agricultural 'protection'.[30]

Many of Winchilsea's most significant public interventions were motivated by his heartfelt belief in the integrity of the Protestant Constitution and the supremacy of the Anglican Church. These causes he pursued, literally, with an evangelical zeal. He served upon the committee of the Kent Church Missionary Society from its foundation, and was a major subscriber. At meetings he confessed his commitment to spreading the Word of God - and the doctrine of the Anglican Church - over

[28] See ch. 5.2.ii.

[29] For Winchilsea's 'I am a Reformer' speech on Penenden Heath see 'Notices and papers on Public Meetings', Stanhope MSS, CKS U1590 C200/3; *MJKA*, 4/5/1830; 16/3/30; *Morning Herald*, 13/3/1830.

[30] In 1831, Winchilsea attempted to introduce a Bill to abolish the Speenhamland system and introduce parish rates to fund the hiring of land for the employment of labourers. The Bill was forced out by the Duke of Wellington, House of Lords, 11/11/1830, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, I, 930-42, 375. See also Jeremy Burchardt, 'Land, Labour and Politics, Parliament and Allotment Plans 1830-1870', in Wordie ed., *Agriculture and Politics in England 1815-1939*, 101.

every part of the world.[31] Winchilsea was also a founder member of the Kent Reformation Society, where he collaborated with his cousin, George Finch. The Kent auxiliary was the first such society, outside the parent association.[32] Taking the chair at its inaugural meeting, he confirmed that it was his duty, and that of 'every follower of the cross of Christ, to endeavour to root out the detestable principles of Popery, and to enable every believer in that church to judge for themselves whether they will serve dark or lightness'.[33] While involved with the short-lived association, Winchilsea put his name to pledges to spread the principles of the Reformation in Ireland, throughout the Empire, and to visiting Irish harvesters in Kent.[34]

For Winchilsea, religion was not just an arena for quiet, personal introspection – indeed, less is known of this side of his character - but a deeply political matter. As a 'Man of Kent', he framed the defence of the Protestant Constitution as a battle against 'foreign' infiltration and corruption, both internal and external. Defending the Protestant Constitution at political meetings, he regularly declared his willingness to 'lay down his life', if it were required by his role as 'defender of the nation'.[35] The battlefields encompassed all the public arenas in which Winchilsea wielded power, from church and religious associations, to county and national

[31] Records of the Kent Church Missionary Society and East Kent Missionary Society, Annual Reports, 1823-1836, Birmingham University Special Collections, CMS/ACC 306, D1-6; *MJKA*, 10/7/1827.
[32] Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain,* 32-35.
[33] *MJKA*, 7/8/1827; *MGKC*, 7/8/1827.
[34] *MJKA*, 4/12/1827; Second annual report of the British Society for promoting the religious principles of the Reformation (London: 1829), 22, BL.
[35] Probably the most widely heard and reported speech that Winchilsea gave using this provocative style of rhetoric was on Penenden Heath, 24/10/1828, *Morning Chronicle*, 25/10/1828; *John Bull*, 26/10/1828; *The Times*, 25/10/1828; *MJKA*, 28/10/1828; *KG*, 28/10/1828.

politics, and he displayed a similar emotive passion in each. His public image, however, was vastly different in Kent from that in the metropole. Indeed, what was seen as idiocy and effeminacy in London society, was seen as the manly and righteous feelings of a leader of men in Kent.

In the Kent 'county community', Winchilsea revelled in his role as a 'Man of Kent', defender of the Protestant Constitution, but he also put great effort into cultivating the image. At a Brunswick Society dinner, celebrating the success of Penenden Heath, his setting was described in detail.

> Over the President's (Winchilsea's) chair, a very handsome transparency was suspended, on which was inscribed the motto 'PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY', entwined with a wreath of laurel. In the orchestra an excellent band of music was stationed, and in front of it two very splendid new silk banners were suspended, which were the present of the Earl of Winchilsea to the club. One was of purple silk, and bore the inscription 'Friends of Civil and Religious Liberty' – the other was of light blue silk, and on it was inscribed 'Our Constitution in Church and State', and below 'Kent', 'Invicta'.[36]

Winchilsea had provided 'two fine bucks' for the feast and the turnout was said to be so good that not all who had bought tickets could be admitted.[37] His typically bombastic speech was once again carefully timed as the Earl presented himself after a rousing rendition of 'See The Conquering Hero Comes', drawing forth 'loud and repeated cheers'.[38]

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[36] *MJKA*, 4/11/1828.
[37] *MJKA*, 4/11/1828.
[38] *MJKA*, 4/11/1828.

Winchilsea was not alone in perpetuating this image. His fellow 'Brunswickers' picked up on his popular potential, toasting him and calling upon his name at meetings where he was absent. Sir Edward Knatchbull identified Winchilsea's key role even before the Penenden Heath meeting, extolling his exceptional 'patriotism', 'attachment to his country' and explaining his motivations as 'a brother's love' for the poor, benighted Irish. 'His is not the patriotism', declared Knatchbull 'which would urge his infatuated countrymen to wade through the blood of his deluded victims to the object of his own pride and ambition. No! Our Chairman is a patriot of a different character'.[39] Indeed, Winchilsea's fame - and the common ground between his brand of robust masculinity and that of rural popular culture - was such that it could reach beyond the cause that he represented. *The Morning Chronicle*'s roving reporter, interviewing the crowds on their way to Penenden Heath, reported: 'On inquiring what Lords Winchilsea's motion was, many replied that they did not know but declared they would support it, whatever it was'.[40]

iv. Winchilsea v. Wellington: The Duel

Penenden Heath represented the peak of Winchilsea's fame as an iconic Man of Kent. It was an image that was to prove hard to sustain, and his popularity, even in Kent, was sorely tested in 1829 by his famous duel with the Duke of Wellington. On the most basic level, however, even his actions here could be interpreted as an assertion of a 'Man of Kent' in defence of the nation, in the guise of Winchilsea's

[39] Edward Knatchbull's Address To the Freeholders of Kent, 8/10/1828, CKS U951/C33/13.
[40] *Morning Chronicle,* 25/10/1829. See also ch. 5.2.ii.

precious Protestant Constitution. The duel was directly initiated by a letter, written by Winchilsea to the secretary for the establishment of King's College, London, and subsequently printed in *The Standard.* Wellington was accused of only backing the college as a 'blind' to his real intentions, which were to 'break-in' on the 'Constitution of 1688' and to 'introduce Popery into every department of the State'. Less quoted extracts from the letter, however, revealed Winchilsea's religious and well as his political zeal. He also charged the Duke with having 'followed in the train of the great defection and apathy from scriptural truth'.[41]

Wellington was not slow to react to this rather unsubtle slander and memorandums were swiftly exchanged between the two parties. Winchilsea ultimately refused to retract his statement. Wellington thus demanded the '...satisfaction for your conduct, which a gentleman has a right to require and which a gentleman never refuses to give'. Winchilsea accepted and a meeting took place in the early hours of Saturday, 21st of March, 1829, on Battersea Fields.[42]

The event itself illustrates the persistence of duelling, and related conceptions of honour, among certain members of the aristocracy and military, despite a sustained campaign against it, particularly from evangelicals.[43] Wellington, who himself

[41] Wellington dispatches, vol. 5, 1828-9, March 1829, 526, USSC Wellington Papers, WP7.
[42] Much of the initial correspondence about the duel can be found in *Annual Register*, 1829, 63-64; *MGKC,* 24/3/1829, 31/3/1829; *MJKA,* 24/3/1829, 31/3/1829. Copies of the full correspondence can be found in the Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1/1004/2-18. I also referred to recently deposited correspondence in the Finch-Hatton collections at the Northamptonshire Record Office, as yet un-catalogued.
[43] The complex place of duelling in 1820s and 1830s England is discussed in my forthcoming paper for *Wellington Studies* (2007). Its relative decline has been explored by the following literature: Ute Frevert, 'Honour and Middle-Class Culture: The History of the Duel in England and Germany', in

thought 'very lightly' of duelling, negotiated the complex currents of public opinion in such a way as to silence his critics and exploit Winchilsea's London reputation as a bit of a 'blockhead'.[44] The outcomes of the duel for Winchilsea, however, illustrate the limitations of the kind of heroic masculinities he had attempted to embody.

In Kent, he came out of the duel with his reputation just about in tact, simply because it could be interpreted as an assertion on behalf of the collective 'Man of Kent' by their most prominent representative. 'The Men of Kent', wrote one Kentish paper, 'consider that his Lordship had fought in their cause. He had maintained the right of his native county to its proud motto Unconquered'.[45] Plans were bandied around for a 'column or some other memorial' to be erected in memory of their hero's efforts. On his return to his Eastwell home after the duel, his expected route from London was lined with people in many towns and villages. In Maidstone, the 'respectable inhabitants' awaited his arrival, in order to give their champion the reception that his 'determined and fearless opposition to Popish principles...deserved'.[46] Meanwhile, workers at a paper mill apparently struck work hoping to be allowed to draw the Earl into town.[47] Winchilsea, however, uncharacteristically missed or avoided the opportunity to be lauded by his devoted

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Kocka and Mitchell, eds., *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*; Kelly, '*That Damn'd Thing Called Honour*'; Elias, *The Civilising Process*, vol.2, 24; Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence in English Society', 29; Andrew, 'The Code of Honour and its Critics', 415.

[44] Andrew Steinmetz, *The Romance of Duelling in all Times and Countries.* In Two Volumes (London, 1868), vol. 2, 336; Wellington to the Duke of Buckingham, 21/4/1829. Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1014/21.

[45] *MGKC*, 31/3/1829.

[46] *MJKA*, 31/3/1829.

[47] *MJKA,* 31/3/1829; *MGKC*, 31/3/1829.

followers. He travelled via Rochester, leaving fans awaiting his entrance to Maidstone 'disappointed'.[48]

For Winchilsea, the experience of the duel itself had hardly been glorious. There were many conflicting forces acting upon him, which led to his virtual paralysis at Battersea Fields. He could not shoot the Prime Minister and hero of Waterloo; it could only end in social disgrace, and possibly bloodshed and arrest.[49] The assertion of individual honour over national good and Christian morality that such an act would have construed would have led to his condemnation in most elite social circles.[50] How the 'Men of Kent' would have interpreted it is to an extent an unknown quantity. The framing of his actions in the defence of the Protestant Constitution may have justified him in the minds of some. However, even acting as he did, many of his advocates found duelling awkward to justify. John Vine Hall, an evangelical who edited the *Maidstone Journal*, expressed his 'abhorrence and detestation of the absurd and senseless practice'. He nevertheless laid no blamed with Winchilsea, conceding that according to the '...rules of honour....Lord Winchilsea was compelled to act as he did...his noble, magnanimous conduct is beyond all praise'. Hall then turned the topic back to what Winchilsea had done on

[48] *MJKA*, 31/3/1829.
[49] Duellists, particularly those who engaged in premeditated duels (those arranged in advance), were subjected to the same laws of homicide as ordinary murderers. Jeremy Horder, 'The Duel and the English Law of Homicide', in *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies,* vol.12, no. 3 (1992).
[50] After the duel, Wellington received dozens of letters expressing shock and abhorrence that he should have risked his life, a national asset, for such a seemingly trivial matter as his own honour. One of the most vocal of his critics on these grounds was Jeremy Bentham, Jeremy Bentham to the Duke of Wellington 23/3/1829. Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1004/17, WP1/1004/22. Less well known critics included Lt-General Corner who wrote to the Duke of Wellington, 23/4/1829 Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1004/23, and a Cornish gentleman, G.S.Borlase, Borlase to the Duke of Wellington, 26/3/1829 Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1005/1.

behalf of the 'Men of Kent' and the probability of his ending up a 'Protestant Martyr'.[51]

As it was, Winchilsea's conduct during the duel was striking for its understatement and even passivity.[52] Wellington did fire, although not at Winchilsea. Some non-witness accounts claimed that Winchilsea 'froze'.[53] The most detailed eyewitness account, written by Dr Hume, a friend of Wellington rather than Winchilsea, asserted that he waited until Wellington had made his shot and then fired into the air. All the while he composed himself in a calm and dignified manner.[54] Under these circumstances, a defiant act of submission was the only physical assertion that the iconic 'Man of Kent' could make in defence of his cherished 'Protestant Constitution'. Nevertheless, no mention was made in accounts or personal correspondence of his duty to the country or the 'Men of Kent'. Writing to his second, the Duke of Falmouth, the night before the duel, he explained that he had no intention of firing. Nevertheless, to go through with the duel was absolutely necessary. To an extent, it boiled down to a matter of honour: he sincerely believed that to back down from his accusation under any lesser circumstance would have made his life, in his own words, 'utterly worthless'.[55]

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[51] *MJKA*, 31/3/1829.
[52] Report by Dr. J.R.Hume to the Duchess of Wellington on the duel between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Winchilsea, 21/3/1829, Wellington Papers, USSC WP1/1004/16.
[53] *The Times*, 23/3/1829.
[54] Report by Dr. J.R.Hume to the Duchess of Wellington, 21/3/1829, Wellington Papers, USSC, WP1/1004/16.
[55] Winchilsea to Falmouth, 20/3/1829, NRO, Finch-Hatton Collection, un-catalogued document.

In Heath's caricature of the event, Wellington, portrayed with a 'lobster'-style head - satirising his profile and his status as a soldier -, and full military hat, is also comically garbed in papal robes and a rosary. The lampoon is not aimed at Wellington, as much as at Winchilsea and his followers' accusations. Winchilsea himself is rather small and understated, despite the fact that he was over six foot tall. According to the caption, he is making himself even smaller so as not to be 'tainted' by Wellington's 'popery' should he be hit. This representation of Winchilsea could not be more different to that of the excitable rabble-rouser of the 'Men of Kent' described on Penenden Heath.[56]

Winchilsea also found it impossible to reconcile his actions with what appeared to be his own religious beliefs. Previously he had been a President of the Reformation Society. He now wrote them a very contrite letter, confessing that his actions were 'in direct violation of the laws of Almighty God' and that it was 'due to the feelings of the religious community', to withdraw from all official situations in religious societies'. The committee of the society quite agreed that his actions were very wrong. Nevertheless, they remained happy to keep the wealthy Earl on their list of subscribers, and re-instated his name on the list of presidents a couple of years later.[57]

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[56] See Figure 6, 'The field of Battersea', by Paul Pry/William Heath, Published March 1829, British museum catalogue reference 15697.

[57] Winchilsea to the President of the Reformation Society, 6/4/1829, *Second Annual Report of the British Society for promoting the religious principles of the Reformation* (London: 1829), 40-42.

Figure 6. 'The field of Battersea,'
by Paul Pry/William Heath.
Published March 1829.
British museum
catalogue reference 15697.

v. The 'Legacy'

Despite the predominantly positive reaction to Winchilsea's role in the duel in Kent, the 'moment' in which the Earl of Winchilsea had particularly embodied the popular qualities of the 'Men of Kent' had passed. His fame had been intrinsically bound to the articulation of his identity through the battles against Catholic Emancipation. Even by the autumn of 1829, this was no longer a large-scale popular cause. There were still opportunities, however, for Winchilsea to play the 'Man of Kent'. In 1830, he jumped at the chance to become Commander-in-Chief of the revived Kent Yeomanry Cavalry. Although at first cautious about whether he could raise enough men because of economic distress and fear of reprisals from incendiaries, he soon entered into the role with gusto, referring to his charges as his 'bold yeomen'.[58] After their annual training, he would address his men with pride, praising their execution of the elaborate manoeuvres he devised for them, and their appearance in fancy uniforms, which he designed. His gushing praise of his men's military virtues, both on and off duty, led him to offer the happy reflection that he 'had not appealed to the Men of Kent in vain'.[59] He also continued to support his favoured political and religious causes, although on a more modest scale, through the Orange Order, in England and in Ireland, and the Conservative Associations in England. To these he bequeathed possibly the most enduring legacy of the Penenden Heath meeting: 'Kentish Fire'.

[58] Winchilsea to Camden, 4/12/1830, Records of the East Kent Yeoman Cavalry, CKS EKY/AG2; Winchilsea to Brecknock, 8/10/1836, CKS U840 0239/241.
[59] Earl of Winchilsea's notes on 1837 Grand Review, CKS EKY/AG2.

The phrase 'Kentish Fire' originated with the 'long and protracted' and somewhat aggressive cheering of the 'Brunswickers' upon Penenden Heath for the anti-Catholic speakers, and their jeering of opponents, which was encouraged by the Peer and his entourage. It passed into common usage at Conservative Association dinners, where appropriate toasts in support of Church, King, Constitution and Corn Laws could be injected with this boisterous passion. 'Kentish Fire' also became common at the meetings of the Orange Order in Ireland, to whom Winchilsea himself introduced the custom. The Earl called for 'Kentish Fire' in a toast for the Earl of Roden at a Dublin meeting in 1834, where, allegedly, he also threatened to bring out his 'Kentish artillery' for the Protestant cause.[60]

Finally, then, it appears that the rowdy drinking culture that united Kentishmen of so many different social backgrounds on Penenden Heath, was enthusiastically embraced and, indeed, perpetuated by the Earl of Winchilsea. Unlike his foray into the field of duelling, his habit of drinking and toasting in the name of 'worthy' causes, did not apparently give his religious conscience too many pangs. Possibly more than anyone, Winchilsea embodied the values of the 'Man of Kent', in the sense that he was a passionate, active and single-minded defender of what he believed to be the institutions and values that embodied his vision of the nation. He played this role in the rowdy, homosocial world of socialising and politics, and – for better or worse - in his everyday life. He was an ardent, enthusiastic, rumbustious man, if never a brilliant one and, apparently, a much-loved husband. A

[60] Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (London: Cassell, 1956), 699-700; *MJKA*, 26/8/1834. For 'Kentish fire' at Conservative Association meetings, see *The Times*, 19/8/1834, 16/11/1835, 4/10/1836, 10/10/1836, 28/11/1836, 6/12/1836.

rare glimpse of Winchilsea's private life - and this character - can be gained from the writings of his third wife, Fanny Margaretta Rice, with whom he had a happy relationship and confided his personal and political cares. In 1852, she wrote:

> He is sitting opposite me now writing an appeal to the county saying it all very loud and exactly as if he were making a speech and appealing to me every instant to help and approve so that I can hardly write. Now he is rejoicing in a fling at Sir Jas. Graham – it is the comfort of one's life to have...one so constantly cheerful and happy – he sings loud over his bills and accounts tho' he has not near enough money to pay them with.[61]

Even domestic life with the iconic 'Man of Kent' bore resemblance to a 'windy day upon Penenden Heath!'

3. The Making of the 'Knights of the Shire': Hodges and Knatchbull

i. Introduction

Despite their common prominence in the 'county community', Thomas Law Hodges and Sir Edward Knatchbull had greatly contrasting personalities and held very different beliefs, in both their political and personal lives. Although surviving artistic impressions display them at very different stages, they capture these contrasts well. Hodges, even at the age of eighteen, appeared strong-jawed and virile, suited to the out-of-doors location of his portrait.[62] Knatchbull, painted later in life, emerged as the eminent Victorian: paternal, steady and powerful, located

[61] Frances Margaretta (born Rice), 3rd Lady Winchilsea to Edward Rice, 1852. quoted in Hammond, *Relating to Jane*, 271.

[62] See Figure 7. Sir William Beechley, Thomas Law Hodges, exhibited c. 1795, Tate Collections, ref. N04688.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ArtistWorks?cgroupid=999999961&artistid=30&page=1>

Figure 7. Sir William Beechley, 'Thomas Law Hodges,' exhibited c. 1795. Tate Collections, ref. N04688.

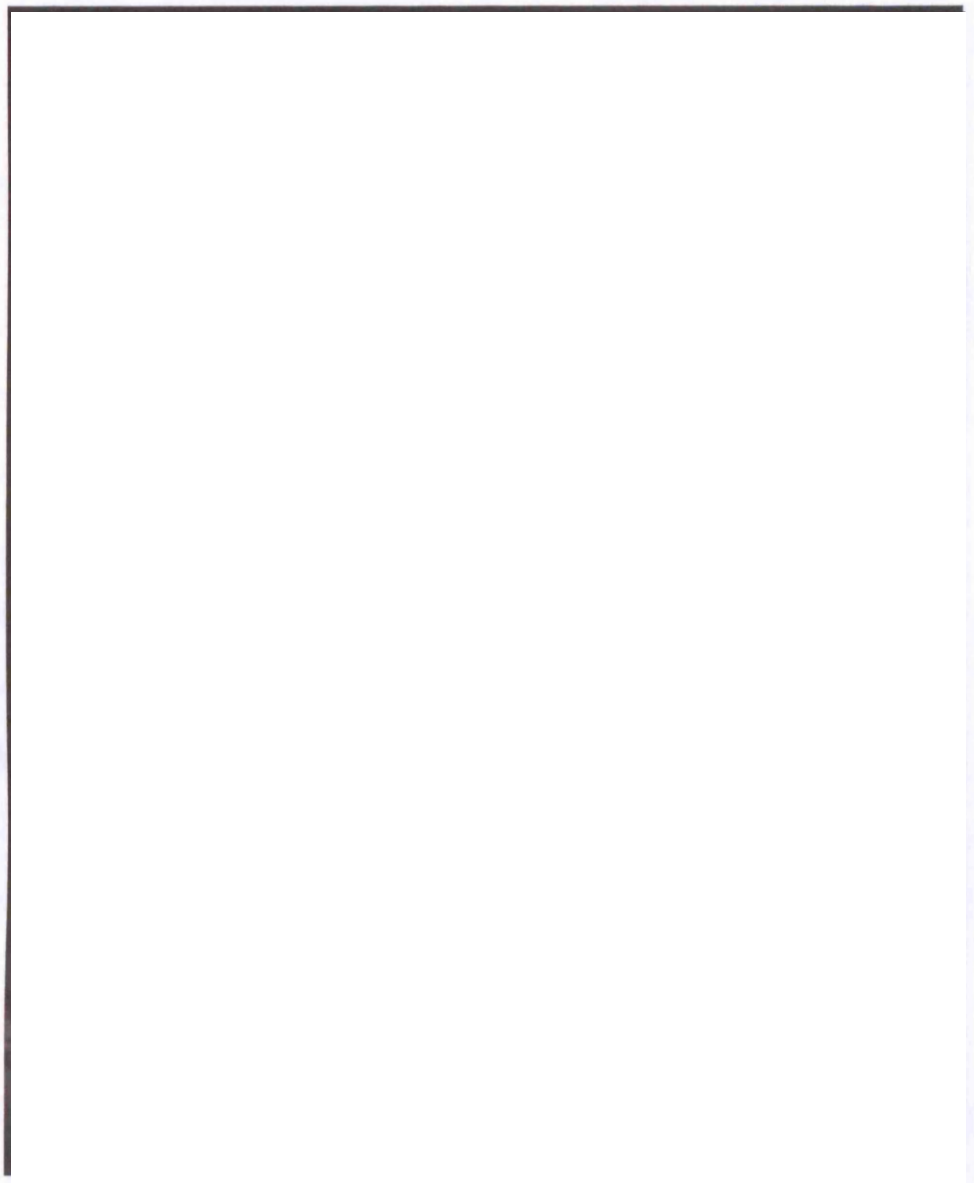

Figure 8. 'Sir Edward Knatchbull, 9th Baronet, 1781 – 1849,' by T. Phillips, c.1836. Portrait formerly hung in Kent County Hall, Maidstone.

inside rather than out, but in ambiguous gloom rather than domestic bliss.[63] Both were driven by a devotion to their county and their country, although their conceptions of these, and their visions of what was best for each, varied. Their 'world-views' were also shaped, although in equally contrasting ways, by experiences gained as young men during the Napoleonic conflicts.

ii. Thomas Law Hodges

Hodges, unlike Knatchbull and Winchilsea, was not born into an 'ancient' Kentish family.[64] The grandson of a governor of Bombay on his father's side, the family's rise to prominence, therefore, owed as much to the 'rewards' of Empire, as it did to the yields of the English land.[65] His mother, Dorothy, came from a Nottinghamshire landed family, the Cartwrights.[66]

The first of his direct line to stand for Parliament, Hodges was a deeply committed and life-long 'Reformer'. The origins of these beliefs may have lain with his maternal uncle, John, Major Cartwright (1740-1824), who had made recent and significant contributions to the national political milieu as a political 'reformer' and a founder of the Hamden Clubs. Cartwright was the author of influential pamphlets, which made claims for manhood suffrage and free Parliament on the grounds of

[63] See Figure 8, T. Phillips, Sir Edward Knatchbull, 9th Bart., 1781 – 1849. Portrait until recently on display in Kent County Hall, Maidstone.
[64] See ch. 3.2.i.
[65] Twisden, *The Family of Twysden or Twisden*, 422.
[66] Twisden, *The Family of Twysden or Twisden*, 422.

Saxon precedent.[67] He was a correspondent of his nephew, who stewarded at some of his uncle's meetings. Hodges maintained a friendship with William Cobbett, which was initiated through Cartwright, until his death. Indeed, Hodges was one of the few 'Country gentleman' of whose practices Cobbett approved. A letter from Cobbett to Hodges, from 1833, shows the warmth of their relationship and the confidence they had in each other on farming matters. In his letter, Cobbett tells how he had travelled into Kent, to find beagles to chase the hares from his cabbages, but had gone to efforts to avoid the 'hop gossip' and the political hotbed of Maidstone because he needed to get back to the 'Wen' to deliver his *Political Register*. He informed Hodges that he would have very much liked to have seen 'the bags of hops that fetch bags of gold' from his Benenden fields, and was keen to take up an offer made by Hodges, to assist him with his 'state of 'agricultural distress'. However, he had felt obliged to stop at the Inn on Penenden Heath in order to write, where one of the dogs he had purchased had gnawed its lead and escaped, and much chaos had ensued before it was recaptured. There had been no time, then, for social or business calls![68]

Despite this amicability, the Hodges family kept peacefully distanced from the turbulent life of their radical friends and relatives, and the Cartwright association,

[67] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 91-93; 'Cartwright, John (1740–1824)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4817>

[68] J. Cartwright to Thomas Law Hodges (hereafter TLH), 16/9/1820, CKS U49/C15/7; William Cobbett to TLH, 3/10/1833, CKS U49 C13/15. Cobbett was also a friend of Major Wayath, another Kentish landowner and Reforming politician.

particularly, was not widely known in Kent.[69] Despite occasional accusations of being a 'radical', Hodges maintained relatively good relations with the stalwart Tory factions in Kentish politics. He served alongside them in his county duties, such as upon the grand jury, and was courted by them as a 'friendly' candidate to stand for the county in Parliament in the early 1820s.[70]

On his road to becoming a 'Knight of the Shire', Hodges faced few repercussions for being a 'radical', or an 'outsider' because he was not from an 'ancient' Kentish family.[71] His marriage to Rebecca Twisden, and subsequent attempts in the 1840s to gain control of the 'ancient' Twisden titles and estates on her behalf, have been cited as the struggles of a politically ambitious usurper.[72] However, this one, apparently scurrilous act, most likely carried out to meet the demands of political costs, does not negate the deeply held and socially resonant beliefs which underpinned Hodges' rise to power in the 1820s.[73]

What, then, motivated Thomas Law Hodges and how did he become an exemplary 'Man of Kent'? Unlike Winchilsea and Knatchbull, he was not associated with any evangelical or church organisations. His personal religious beliefs found their way to a letter of 1827 when, shortly following his father's death, he wrote that only the

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[69] By 1820, Hodges, despite maintaining good relations, refused to steward at his uncles meetings, Twisden, *The Families of Twysden or Twisden*, 422.
[70] *The Times*, 27/7/1831; *MJKA*, 4/4/1820.
[71] Indeed, the only moment at which his role as some sort of 'Other' was vaunted was by East Kent Tories who, in 1831, objected to two 'Reformers' from the 'Weald' being elected 'Knights of the Shire'. See ch. 4.2.ii.
[72] Ronald G. & Christopher H. Hatton, *Notes of the families of Twysden or Twisden* and, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 58 (1945), 47; Twisden, *The Families of Twysden*, 422.
[73] The huge costs rising from Thomas Twisden Hodges' election in Rochester in 1835 are revealed in the accounts, which included a £1000 donation from his father, CKS U49/C13/67.

'consolation of religion' could heal such a scar.[74] As a public man, however, his first commitment was as a 'Country gentleman', a role that his radical relative expected of him. Cartwright wrote to his nephew that the role of the 'gentry' was crucial to the survival of the 'English spirit' and the 'country's salvation'.[75] Duly, Hodges was active at county meetings and in Agricultural Associations, throughout the 1820s, and his sturdy demeanour, plain style of speaking, and success as an agriculturalist made him an outstandingly popular choice for a 'Knight of the Shire'.

Hodges' main preoccupation in the 1820s was to improve the 'condition' of the countryside and the people within it.[76] 'Reform', when it loomed in debates, was about representation of the farmers and gentry - the two most important estates of the agricultural interest in parliament - and agricultural prosperity. He opposed the link between free-trade and 'Reform', expressing in 1827 that he hoped that the new Canning administration would not let Huskisson and his economic doctrines of 'vehement idolatry' carry the day.[77] But Hodges' assertions on behalf of the agricultural interest in this period operated primarily on the county and local levels: a keen agricultural improver, he wrote several pamphlets, one promoting a plough

[74] TLH to Bartle, 9/9/1827, CKS U49 3/13/140.
[75] J. Cartwright to TLH, 14/1/1814, CKS U49 C13/5.
[76] Hodges testified on numerous select committees in the 1820s, regarding matters of agricultural distress, often describing methods he had adopted on his estate, including emigration, and the recommendations of Cobbett's *Cottage Economy*, PP 1826, Emigration, 133-185. A selection of Hodges contributions are published in a pamphlet, Thomas Law Hodges, *Minutes of evidence given by Thomas Law Hodges to the select committee of the House of Commons* (London: 1833).
[77] TLH to Bartle, 9/9/1827, CKS U49 C13/140.

invented by a tenant, particularly suited to the wet clay of the Weald.[78] Although relying primarily on tenants for farming his property, he was greatly attached to his lands, particularly his 'golden hops', which foreign vineyards could never equal 'in interest'.[79]

In parliament or not, the stolid Hodges was seen as a man of action, and the 'Independent' sector of the 'county community' marked him down as an ideal representative. He persistently resisted calls to stand for Parliament, and to challenge the incumbent 'Independent' 'Knight of the Shire', Sir John Honeywood, whose non-residence and faltering health made his position controversial. Beyond the 'county community', Thomas Arlesford, of Hampshire, urged Hodges, in 1823, that he must stand forward as a 'Country gentleman' to do something about the 'present state of the Country' in parliament.[80] Hodges finally stood as a candidate for the county in 1830, only when nominated by others and when ill-health finally forced Honeywood out of office. He defined the moment in which he shifted the focus of his crusade to the national arena as a momentous one, when, 'willing in mind and able in bodily health' he sincerely believed he needed to help his country as it faced a 'most awful crisis'.[81]

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[78] Thomas Law Hodges, *The Use and Advantage of Pearson's Draining Plough* (London: James Ridgeway, 1833).
[79] In Benenden, where he held the bulk of his estate, all of the lands were occupied by tenants except Benenden Wood & plantation (which he probably used for hunting), Benenden Award Schedule, 13/3/1837. <http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Maps/BEN/02B.htm>
TLH to Bartle, 9/9/1827, U49 C13/140.
[80] Thomas Arlesford of Bighton, Hampshire to TLH, 12/2/1823, CKS U49 C13/3.
[81] TLH to Edward Hughes, 9/7/1830, CKS U49 C13/15; TLH to Major Wayth, CKS U49 C13/156.

The problems of 1830 were all too apparent to Hodges, who had long perceived a 'worsening' state of the countryside and was a firm believer in a 'golden age' of self-sufficiency among small farmers and good conditions for labourers, which had been lost in the past forty years. Testifying to the Poor Law commissioners in 1830, he stated that, in his own parish of Benenden, he had borne witness to the loss of live-in labour, homebrewed beer and a social mobility through which labourers could become smallholders. According to Ian Dyck, this empathy was rare for a large landowner and 'went beyond the cultural trappings of old England'.[82] Nevertheless, Hodge's solutions were resolutely 'paternalist': overpopulation and the supplementation of wages out of poor rates had corrupted the familial order of society. The landlord could no longer look after 'his own' and the small farmer had been debased.[83]

iii. Hodges and Ireland

However, there was one striking, and less self-evident, recurring theme in Hodges utilisation of the ideologies of 'Old England': the Irish. Indeed, his conception of the correct workings of society, and his role within it, were shaped by a life-long preoccupation with the 'sister kingdom'.

In 1798, the West Kent Militia volunteered to go to Ireland to 'suppress the Rebellion', having been called upon by the commander of the Southern division of the volunteers, Colonel James, to prove themselves worthy of the 'honourable' title

[82] PP 1830/1, Poor Law VIII, 22-3, Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture,* 139.
[83] PP 1830/1, Poor Law VIII, 22-3.

of 'men of the loyal county of Kent'.[84] The officers who embarked on the expedition included Hodges and Lieutenant-Colonel George Finch Hatton, father of the Earl of Winchilsea. Captain Hodges' diary gave lurid accounts of the execution of 'rebels', witnessed and carried out by the volunteers in their line of duty. Hodges' frank account described his charges arriving at several Irish towns after the 'barbaric' and 'disloyal rebels' had committed 'atrocities' and 'massacres'. In the wake of this, the Kentish Militia men appeared to take great pleasure, indeed, were 'overjoyed' to be given the chance to show their loyalty by executing rebels who had sinned against their King and country.[85]

While Hodges was impressed by this physical demonstration of 'loyalty' by his men, he was most affected himself by the state of the labouring classes of Ireland and wrote emotively on their 'depraved' condition compared to the English cottager: 'Good God', he confided in his diary, '...the comparison is too much in favour of my happy countryman not to exclaim – Can these two mortals own the same King, the same constitution...and live under the influence of the same laws'? He concluded that 'something must be done to make these poor wretches think life worth living', and, crucially, to instil some of the loyalty to King and Country, which he believed was felt by the English 'cottagers', in Irish 'peasants'.[86] The experience, which was bolstered by the regiment's return to Ireland in 1815, left an indelible impression on the young Kentish landowner.

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[84] J. Bonhote, *Historical Records of the West Kent Militia* (London: 1909), 169-170.
[85] Diary of Thomas Law Hodges, 1/8/1798, 24/9/1798, BL Add MS 40,166 N.
[86] Diary of Thomas Law Hodges, 8/2/1799.

In his post-war political career, Ireland was a constant reference point for Hodges' fears for the declining state of the English labourers, both physical and moral. Like his friend Cobbett, who went to see the 'Irish problem' for himself in 1834, he hoped that England would not become another Ireland.[87] In the face of strong anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment in Kent, he stuck to his conviction that something must be done for that 'oppressed and unhappy country'.[88] Nevertheless, his sympathy was mixed with a strong conviction of 'difference'. When Irish people sought to extract themselves from their difficulties by seeking work in England, they were instantly perceived as an intrusive menace. This theory was applied at the height of the Swing riots of 1830. Hodges knew well that the men that he and his son confronted on his own estate during 'Swing' were local, yet he maintained to the Poor Law Commissioners that Ireland was the crux of the problem for Kent. Even though, he claimed, that the saturated population levels in the Weald meant that there were fewer Irish there than in other areas, they were still guilty of undercutting the wages of Kentish workers.[89] Despite early support, Hodges also joined Cobbett in eschewing emigration schemes for local labourers if they meant that the 'best' of the English would be replaced by the 'worst' of the Irish.[90]

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[87] Cobbett routinely used the state of Ireland as a 'warning to England', see for example, *CPR* 18/10/1834. A selection of Cobbett's writings on Ireland, which convey this message strongly, are published in Denis Knight, ed., *Cobbett in Ireland. A Warning to England* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1984).

[88] T. L. Hodges, *A report of the speeches delivered at the Kent County Meeting, holden on Penenden Heath, October 24, 1828, with prefatory remarks.* Hodges' reports on the state of Kent to various parliamentary commissions in the 1820s and 1830s contain many comparisons of the poor of England to those of Ireland. Many of these are summarised in a pamphlet, Thomas Law Hodges, *Minutes of evidence given by Thomas Law Hodges to the select committee of the House of Commons* (London: 1833).

[89] *Kent Herald*, 18/11/1830; PP 1826, Emigration, 133-141, 182-3; PP 1830/1, Poor Law XIII, 20-23.

[90] *CPR*, 9/4/31. Hodges gave a similar opinion in conversation with Poor Law Commissioner, A.Majendie, PP 1833, Poor Law, annexe A, 210.

The man who had constructed himself, and was perceived by many others, as the consummate English country gentleman, therefore, drew upon the Irish 'Other' to focus his mind on what it was to be 'English' and his visions of England in the past, present and future. Hodges' early experiences in Ireland compounded his fears of decline in England - fears that came close to being realised in 1830 when the spectre of Ireland haunted English interpretations of 'domestic' conflicts. Moreover, the presence of the Irish, compounded his imaginings of England and the English as an organic entity – it was these intruders who, fuelled by the non-existence of an Irish poor law, took the jobs of 'our poor', rendering the English unable to look after 'their own'.[91]

In 1830 to 1832, Hodges and his supporters mobilised these beliefs, through the rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' and the 'yeomen' to make a compelling case for Parliamentary 'Reform', focussing upon the reinstatement, or reconfiguration, of this 'yeoman' society. Part of this campaign was to present Hodges as the ultimate 'yeomen of Kent', the representation of the tradesmen and farmers, in contrast to the selfish aristocracy, represented by the Tories.[92] Despite his 'Reform' credentials, then, Thomas Law Hodges *was* a devout 'Old Englander'.

[91] PP 1828, Poor Law, 20.
[92] See ch. 5.3.ii. A draft of one of TLH's speeches that directly made this argument, citing the 'tyrranic' acts of some landlords towards tenants and tradesmen, c. 1832, can be found at CKS U49 C13/157, 'Election speech drafts'.

iii. Sir Edward Knatchbull.

Sir Edward Knatchbull, like Hodges and Winchilsea, has not passed into posterity with the most sparkling of reputations. According to Norman Gash, he was 'one of the most respected and respectable of the Independent county members'; he was also 'high-minded, mediocre, diffident and dull...'.[93] However, Knatchbull, like the others, was, in his own way, a hard-working and passionate 'defender of the nation': a 'Man of Kent', if not always comfortable in the role. Sir Edward's writings illustrated the prime importance of family and Christianity in his life, of all else being the calls of 'patriotism' and 'duty', and of continual conflicts of conscience, which intensified with his increased devotion to evangelicalism. His attachment to the nation was to 'Old England', a vision based upon conceptions of a paternalist, hierarchical society in which power was invested in church, King and property. These were deeply-felt beliefs.

Knatchbull's reaction to the seemingly unstoppable progress of 'Reform', and the loss of his county seat in Parliament in 1830, revealed the depths of his devotion. By August, the tension in the Kentish countryside around him had reached boiling point and infighting between the Tory factions in parliament, in which he was greatly involved, had severely weakened the party in the face of growing support for Whig 'Reform' proposals. On visiting the baronet, Joseph Planta, on a mission

[93] Norman Gash, *Aristocracy and People: Britain 1815-1865* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 92; quoted in Brian Atkinson, 'National Politics in Kent', in Yates, Hume & Hastings eds., *Religion and Society in Kent*, 145-6. For more on his political career see B. T. Bradfield, 'Sir Richard Vyvyan and the Country Gentlemen, 1830-1834', in, *The English Historical Review*, vol. 83, no. 329 (1968), 729-743; Carl Griffin, 'Policy on the Hoof: Sir Robert Peel, Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Trial of the Elham Machine Breakers, 1830'. *Rural History*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1-22.

to find out whether Sir Edward would give his support to Wellington, found him 'very melancholy', and his fears for the future verging on the apocalyptic. As they shot pheasants on his estate, the baronet lamented at the start of his cautious plans for the future: '*If* Old England should go on...' and '*If* we shall last for five years...'. In 1831, Gleig warned Wellington against correspondence with Knatchbull because of his 'foreboding of evil'.[94]

This tremulous, despondent individual seems a far cry from the 'sturdy', 'manly' John Bullish figure portrayed in accounts of his public life.[95] But then, the 'Man of Kent' was an uneasy performance for Knatchbull, who certainly did not possess the gregarious character of his good friend, Lord Winchilsea. His reserved, careful nature, however, did not impress Jane Austen any more than Winchilsea's bumptiousness. The authoress described him, after an 1813 afternoon tea, as 'good-natured you know, and civil, and all that', but not 'particularly superfine'. She showed a distinct preference for the company of his infant half-brother, Wadham.[96]

iv. Shifting Alliances: Sir Edward, Family, Death and Religion

The familial world of 'Pride and Prejudice', into which Knatchbull was born, was equally one of war and death. Sir Edward's early years were marked by the loss of his mother, Mary Hugesson, who had brought her family's estate at Provender into the Knatchbull fold, and then the happy remarriage of his father to Francis Graham, the daughter of a former governor of Georgia, whom Edward and his brother,

[94] Gleig to Wellington, 29/7/1831, Wellington Papers, USSCC WP1/1190/17.
[95] Shiel, *Sketches, Legal and Political*, 214.
[96] JA to CA, 23/11/1813, in Lord Brabourne ed., *Letters of Jane Austen*, 161.

Norton, adored.[97] The deaths of both Francis and Norton in 1799, the latter interwoven with the events of war, and the swift and 'unsuitable' remarriage of his father, were pivotal moments in his early life.

Written recently after the event, Edward's account of Norton's death was brimming with raw emotion.[98] Having been called from Oxford to Torbay, to nurse an elderly friend of the family named Portal - a strange task for an elder son - he was pleased to hear that the *San Josef*, the 'man of war' on which his brother was serving, was at Brixham.[99] Edward was joyful at the prospect of seeing Norton, as they had not been together for some time. They dined together at an inn, and were 'truly happy' despite Edward's fears that his brother looked 'a little thin'. Discussing their sorrow at their step-mother's recent death, they mused on their father's distress, little knowing 'that he was soon about to forget his late wife, and to give us cause both of complaint and distress'. Indeed, only a few days later, they learnt of his intended third marriage, and of the youth and religion of the bride, which was not the established one of 'our country'. [100] Norton was concerned for the welfare of their younger brothers and sisters, and they promised each other that they would look after their siblings' happiness, and particularly their education and spiritual welfare, should anything happen to either of them. They were adamant that the younger members of their family should not become Catholics.

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[97] Knatchbull-Hugesson, *Kentish Family*, 144.
[98] The following account is drawn from the 'Private Notes of Sir Edward Knatchbull, 1801-1846', partially undated, CKS U951 F20.
[99] The Portals were part of the Austen/Knight/Knatchbull kinship network, Hammond, *Relating to Jane*, 244. The *San Josef*, originally a French 'man of war', was captured by Nelson at the Battle of the Nile.
[100] Mary Hawkins was the daughter of Thomas Hawkins of Nash Court, Boughton-under-Blean, Knatchbull-Hugesson, *Kentish Family*, 155.

After this bittersweet parting, Edward returned to Torbay, where Portal subsequently died. Soon after, he received a letter explaining that his brother was very unwell and that he should come to Plymouth at once. He had Norton transferred from the *Princess Royal*, where he later discovered that Norton had been treated 'neglectfully', to a horrific public hospital. Here, his 'dear brother, carrying the image of death on his countenance, was surrounded by a number of poor wretches looking more deplorable than himself' and with 'no brother to assist them' or 'friend to afford them any consolation'. The surgeons, however, were optimistic about Norton Knatchbull, and Edward left him, albeit uneasily, with a warm farewell and a 'God bless you'. In the morning he was told at the hospital gates that his brother had taken a turn for the worse in the night, had 'continually' called for him, but had died alone in the early hours. Edward took charge of all arrangements after the death. He also took it upon himself to quench rumours that Norton had 'sunk from a venereal complaint', writing that, on examination, he was 'perfectly satisfied' that there had been 'no impropriety on his part'.

The bond of brotherhood had been the most important relationship in Edward's life so far. Norton had been Edward's 'dearest friend' and he wrote after his death that they were 'never separated without shedding tears', and 'words cannot express the pangs which I felt' on their parting forever. However, the future Baronet did not leave the account of his brother's death with these touching, and immediate sentiments. He recorded the evolution of his emotions in the margins of his initial

text. He maintained this affection throughout the coming decade. In 1801, he complained of the eighth baronet's 'apathy' over his son's death, and the next year lamented that no monument had been erected for Norton (although, an additional comment, from 1820, notes that he had found the bill for such a monument in his recently deceased father's papers, and that he found it 'strange that he had never been told'). In 1806, on the verge of his marriage to Annabella Christina Honeywood, a new line of thought emerges. Finally, Edward hoped he had found someone who would, with their sincere friendship, 'supply the loss of my brother', a belief confirmed the following year, although he also felt 'gratified' that his feelings towards Norton had not changed.

After 1808 the annual comments ceased and more sporadic interactive visits were made to the journal. In 1816 he added touching reflections on the death of his first wife. A comment, possibly from 1818, reflected on his brother's death, conjectured that his depression had been 'unmanly', but that his sufferings, both before and since, had been enough to justify such desolation. Startling changes, however, were discernible in the comments added in 1835 and 1841, when the established parliamentarian looked back upon his thoughts as a young man and condemned them.

Although fear of the culture and beliefs associated with Catholicism, and how they might infiltrate his family's religion, was profound, God was not a central part of young Edward's narratives. At least, it was not central enough for his future self's

satisfaction. The baronet's ire was directed at the extremity of emotion conveyed after Norton's death and his then inability to trust in God. 'Why human misery! It is the fate of all men! I thought I was religious in those days - I hope I am more now!' He also reviled himself for his youthful need for close companions, his brother and his wife, in whom to confide. 'I marvel at how I could have thus written - for I never in my life imparted my distress to anyone...', he mused. The Lord was this man's closest companion: 'there is another and a higher source of support'.

This changed attitude was not merely a lack of sentiment engendered by maturity; indeed, letters between the baronet and his second wife, Fanny, were notable for their affection. Husband and wife wrote regularly whenever Sir Edward was away in London or other travels. He often entreated his 'dear Fanny' not to worry, and on one occasion playfully branded her a 'little Tyrant of a wife' for forcing him to write when they were only apart for a very short time.[101] Neither can it be said that Sir Edward was now unaccustomed to the loss of loved ones. His letters to his wife illustrate his persistent concerns for his boys' health, and between 1818 and 1845, he lost his first wife and no fewer than five children, four of whom were in their teens and twenties.[102] However, he now consoled himself with his religion. On the death of his 'favourite' and youngest daughter Fanny at the age of twenty, he took comfort in her last words being of her deep faith, which led him to comment: 'God

[101] EK to FK, 11/11/1824, 2/5/1822, correspondence of EK and FK, 1820 to 1845, CKS U951 C2-4.
[102] EK to FK, 2/5/1822, 4/8/1822, CKS U951, C2-4. Those of Sir Edward's children who died young are not listed on all official pedigrees. They were Mary Dorothea (1809-1838), Edward (1816-1818), Charles Henry (1811-1837), Wyndham (1812-1833) and Fanny (1825-1845), Private notes of Sir Edward Knatchbull, 1801-1846, partially undated, CKS U951 F20.

has been good. Very kind to me'.[103] His later writings, increasingly mournful in tone, were marked by lamentations on his inadequacies and humility, remarking on one occasion: 'I am a very worm...', his only salvation being his 'trust in God'.[104]

The Sir Edward Knatchbull of the 1830s thus pursued his familial duties with a religious fervour. He also adhered to his religion in public life. From the early 1820s, he showed a great interest in the evangelical movement, becoming chairman of the Kent Church Missionary Association on its incarnation in 1823. He remained in the post, despite direct criticism of him among the Anglican establishment, such as that from Reverend Gleig, over whether missionary work was within the strict boundaries of their church's doctrine.[105] Knatchbull's religious zeal was also applied to his political life, where he admitted to no real desire for power. After his appointment to Peel's Cabinet, his 'most important' moment ever in public life, he confided in his diary, 'I have no other earthly object at heart but the good of my country - I will perform my duty, I trust to Him for support'.[106] Moreover, he wished that his beloved wife and children, expected in London soon, were living 'quietly in the country - far removed from the toils of this city, and the miseries of

[103] See also EK's comments on the death of his 'poor friend' Winchilsea's, wife, 14/7/1834. Political Journal of Sir Edward Knatchbull, CKS U951 F21.
[104] EK to FK, 16/11/1840, CKS U951, C13/16,
[105] G.R. Gleig, *Letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull baronet, on his accepting the office of President at a meeting of auxiliary church missionary Association held at the Town Hall, Maidstone, on 14th August last* (London: 1823); Thomas Bartlett, *Letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull in reply to Reverend G. R. Gleig* (London: Hachard & Son, 1823).
[106] Political Journal of EK, 19/7/1834.

public life'. Political life, indeed, was represented as something to endure for 'God and country' and best separated from the sanctuary of home and family.[107]

So, how can this 'private' and 'spiritual' man be reconciled with the public image of the boisterous 'Man of Kent', standing alongside the Earl of Winchilsea as he bellowed his 'Kentish Fire'. This image is made all the more intriguing when, in the 1830s, the still much-toasted Knatchbull became an active supporter of the temperance movement.[108] There is only one explanation: Sir Edward Knatchbull was a man of deep, and religiously motivated beliefs, one of which was to carry out his duty to his country and his county. To do so, it was imperative to be a 'Man of Kent', and to participate in the 'county community's' boisterous political culture. It could only have been through a religious sense of duty, and a deeply felt love for his vision of 'Old England', that Sir Edward Knatchbull presented himself as such.

4. Becoming a 'Man of Kent': Charles Knatchbull and Robert Cowton

i. Introduction

This final section considers the subjectivities of two contrasting men who grew up in Kent in the 1820s and 1830s. They both came from relatively privileged backgrounds: Charles Henry, born in 1811, was one of Sir Edward Knatchbull's sons by his first wife. Robert Cowton was born in 1817 into the middling classes of Canterbury. He was the son of Maiver Cowton, a successful newspaper editor,

[107] Ibid.; for his preferment of family over public life, see letters between EK and FK, 1820 to 1845, CKS U951, C2-4.
[108] *MJKA*, 23/12/1835; *MJKA* 1/7/1837; Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Kentish Family*, 34.

bookseller and printer, and a mayor of the city.[109] Both participated in the rowdy drinking culture so integral to being a 'man' in Kent, and embarked, with varying success, on military careers, the prospect of which evoked starkly contrasting reactions. Cowton and Knatchbull also experienced common conflicts between their religion and the pulls of their social life and careers although, once again, these were experienced in very different ways. For Cowton, at least, the triumph of his religious belief was only achieved or, indeed, contemplated when he left Canterbury for a new life elsewhere. For Knatchbull, the conflict between his religious feelings, fostered by his family's evangelicalism, and his way of life in Kent and in the army, was resolved only by departure and death.

The military continued to be an important arena of experience for men in the post-war era. The army was still a viable career for the younger sons of the upper echelons of society, as it was for the middling classes of Kent's provincial towns. As Cowton's testimony shows, the behaviour of the stationed military in Canterbury shocked 'respectable society' and the official voices of 'public opinion' but it also evoked fascination and even admiration among locals to whom boisterous behaviour and excessive drinking were cultural norms.[110] The image of the well-built, dashing soldier was not only imitated by the Earl of Winchilsea, but was also one to which young men aspired, and faced pressure to conform to in both their careers in the army and in public and familial life.

[109] The Cowton's were first generation city residents. Cowton's paternal grandfather had been a farmer from nearby Blean, Cowton, *Passages from the Autobiography of a 'Man of Kent'*, 3.
[110] See ch. 4.2.ii-iii.

The sons of Lord Harris of Belmont, Sittingbourne, for example, acutely felt their father's expectations for their physical prowess as well as for them to succeed as officers.[111] Unsurprisingly, for a man who owed his status to his army career, five of his six sons followed him into the military. His favourite son, Charles Harris, who was killed in action in 1815, was described by his father as 'a match for any Hyder Ali that ever stepped on foot or charger'.[112] The eldest son, William George Harris, felt keenly his inferiority in both stature and reputation to his brother, worrying about his 'leanness' and that he was 'unlikely to ever be the size his father predicted (or would like)'.[113] These expectations of masculinity, among others, can be detected in the experiences of Charles Knatchbull and Robert Cowton.

ii. Charles Knatchbull

Charles Henry Knatchbull led a happy, if not entirely healthy childhood. He returned from Oxford, aged 22, and spent a carefree few months as a feckless young man about Kent. His favourite pastimes included gambling, hunting, squabbling with his brothers – an activity which could end in blows - , reading Byron, 'having fun with the maids upstairs', and frequenting the Freemasons

[111] See ch 4.2.i. The 'victor of Seringapatam', Lord Harris, settled in latter years at Belmont, where he enjoyed playing the role of the paternalist, gentleman farmer, Alastair W. Massie, 'Harris, George, first Baron Harris (1746–1829)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12387> . See also Stephen Rumbold Lushington, *The Life and Services of General Lord Harris, G.C.B., during his Campaigns in America, the West Indies, and India* (London: 1840), esp. 444-452, 468.

[112] 'Notes on the Harris Correspondence', CKS U624.

[113] William George Harris to Musgrave Harris, 14/11/1805, and (undated) 1822, CKS U624 C25/11, C25/83; Lord Harris to Musgrave Harris, 27/11/1822, CKS U624 C4/1.

Lodge.[114] He showed little direct interest in politics, although he read the Kentish and the Oxford newspapers, and commented on the 'very good sight' of his father being re-elected on Barham Downs in January 1835.[115] He regularly walked and dined with Ellen Fane, daughter of another well-established Kentish family. The exact nature of their relationship is unclear, but the happy times spent together - without any apparent interference from parents - indicated that they could have been betrothed. Long, solitary walks in the countryside seem to have been a common courtship ritual amongst upper-class couples in Kent.[116] Nevertheless, Sir Edward Knatchbull's powerful sense of religion, if not of religious duty in everyday life, was translated to his son. Charles attended church regularly, sometimes twice a day on Sunday, as did his siblings, and harboured a religiosity that he concealed from his peers. He admitted in his diary that he prayed night and day, even though he knew that there were those who would 'ridicule' him.[117]

Despite Charles's quiet religious devotion, Sir Edward was unhappy with his second oldest surviving son's conduct - and the ensuing bills. In May 1835, he arranged for him a commission in the army. Rather than being thrilled at the prospect of a fulfilling career, the son was deeply unhappy at the prospect of being sent away.[118] Nevertheless, there is no indication of a quarrel, and he resigned

[114] Diary of Charles Henry Knatchbull 1834-5 (hereafrer CHK), 20/3/1834, 10/4/1834, 19/4/1834, 25/4/1834, 20/4/1834, CKS U951 F22. Byron was popular with the Kentish gentry at this time. See also, Journal of Matilda Twisden, 1831 (mainly undated), CKS U49/F76.
[115] Diary of CHK, 14/1/1835, 15/1/1835, 5/2/1834, 5/4/1834.
[116] Although her 'nurse' was shocked when Edward Rice of Dane Court took Elizabeth Knight (Fanny's younger sister) on such expeditions prior to their marriage in 1818, M.C. Hammond, *Relating to Jane*, 183.
[117] Diary of CHK, 27/6/1835.
[118] Diary of CHK, 19/5/1835.

himself to his fate. In preparation, he took up sword exercises on a nigh daily basis. Later, writing in India, he looked back upon his heartbreaking last days with his friends and family as the most 'miserable' period of his life.[119]

Unsurprisingly, Charles found settling into army life in Meerut difficult after his happy time in Kent. He dealt with his homesickness by keeping a diary, written for Ellen Fane. She in return sent out a series of detailed letters recounting ongoing life in Kent, which may have been contributed to by other members of the kinship network. Being out of England, and away from Ellen, crystallised for Charles what his country meant to him. 'Home' was associated with pleasant walks with Ellen in the garden at Mersham, or expeditions into the 'deep and lovely vale' - a favourite phrase.[120] Anniversaries of these little pleasures were noted regularly, leading Charles to lament: 'there is no place like old England'.[121]

A relatively familiar environment, however, could be found in the homosocial culture of the officers' mess. Charles continued his culture of drinking and socialising late into the night, in an atmosphere where there could be 'billiard balls and oaths flying about everywhere'– something he was not ashamed to admit to Ellen.[122] In contrast, Ellen's journals are limited to relatively prosaic and detailed accounts of the endless rounds of balls, weddings, illness's and gig-accidents (a surprisingly regular occurrence which often resulted in injury). Although she signs

[119] Diary of CHK , 7/7/1836, 8/7/1836.
[120] Diary of CHK 1836-7, 17/8/1836, 28/6/1836, CKS U951 F23.
[121] Diary of CHK, 1/6/1836.
[122] Diary of CHK, 1/7/1836.

herself 'your affectionate friend', her sentiments are relatively staid. Her expressions of regret at Charles' absence are chiefly reserved for accounts of collective toasts and prayers at New Year and Christmas. She may, of course, have feared more intimate expressions being read by others. Unsurprisingly, remaining in the familiar people and landscapes of Kent simply did not produce the same sense of separation as being in India did for Charles.[123]

Charles, on the other-hand, was launched into a completely new circle of companions, from a diverse spectrum of social backgrounds and with political viewpoints far removed from his father's Kentish brand of Toryism. This drove him to assert his political views more passionately than there is any evidence he had in Kent, although he may have encountered such opposition at Oxford. He fought several verbal, and possibly physical, battles with a 'radical' named Dr. Pine, an admirer of the politician Joseph Hume, who on one occasion attempted to 'cry down' Lord Winchilsea.[124] Charles put a stop to this by saying that Winchilsea 'was a very intimate friend and did not deserve all that was said'.[125] He also clashed with a Mr Proby, a 'North countryman' whose preaching he did not like.[126] Reading matter provided another political battleground. He strove to ensure the mess took 'honest Tory', rather than radical newspapers, *John Bull* being favoured over *Bell's Life in London.*[127] Unsurprisingly, much less is recorded of Charles's relationships

[123] Ellen Fane, 'Wormsley Journal', 30/1/1836, 1/7/1836, CKS U951 C149-50.
[124] For an overview of Humes interventions in the 1832 Reform Act, the condition of the working class and free-trade see, V. E. Chancellor, 'Hume, Joseph (1777–1855)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14148>.
[125] Diary of CHK, 17/8/1836, 22/8/1836.
[126] Diary of CHK, 1/7/1836.
[127] Diary of CHK, 2/6/1836, 6/7/1836.

with subalterns or colonised people, although he commented on several occasions on the brutal treatment of private soldiers, normally acknowledging the punishments were well-deserved.

Charles's contributions to the regiment in India were limited. While embracing Kentish masculinity, to the extent that he enjoyed socialising, drinking and hunting, he never really showed any enthusiasm for soldiering itself. Indeed, his major legacy, at least by his own record, was one that belied his background as an indulged aristocrat's son: a campaign to have the regimental cap changed. Charles considered the current designed to be 'damned ugly' compared to the latest London fashions with which his father had equipped him.[128] The other officers, despite rumblings about necessity and cost, agreed it was 'more becoming' and the Colonel conceded that, as Charles was the newest arrival, it must be right. Further contributions of any sort, however, were hampered by Charles's health, which declined steadily from the time of his arrival. By June 1836, echoing the worries of William Harris, he complained of looking 'pale' and his inability to 'grow fat', however hard he tried. His already established habit of staying in bed for as long as possible – something he had guiltily indulged in back in Kent - turned into necessity. By September 1836 his diary entries faded away because he was too ill to perform his duty, and had 'nothing to relate'.[129] He died on the 17th of February

[128] Diary of CHK, 2/7/1836.
[129] Diary of CHK, 23/9/1836.

1837 on board a ship on its passage from Calcutta. His family learned of the news on the 3rd of June.[130]

iii. Robert Cowton

Destined for a very different fate was Robert Cowton, author of a memoir entitled *Autobiography of a Man of Kent.*[131] Growing to young manhood in the rough and permissive social world of Canterbury in the 1820s and early 1830s, he frequented rowdy drinking clubs, and was witness to, if not a partaker of, swearing, extreme sexual licentiousness, pornography and violence.[132] A remarkable passage in his autobiography describes an older man showing Cowton 'filthy and abominable books, profusely illustrated, and calculated to excite within me, and prematurely to develop, all that was bad in the nature...'.[133] Locally barracked soldiers and officers were part of this circle, proving 'handsome and fascinating', both to young girls, and to Cowton himself.[134] He was surrounded by images of war and conquest: in Canterbury's Madame Tussauds Waxworks he viewed models of Wellington, Nelson and Napoleon, the name at which once 'the world grew pale'. In the peep show at the fair, he peered in fascination at the 'battles of Waterloo, Nile and Trafalgar', which could be viewed, alongside the recent grisly murder of 'Maria Martin in the Red Barn'.[135]

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[130] Diary of FK, 3/6/1836.
[131] The Cowton's were first generation city residents. Cowton's paternal grandfather had been a farmer from nearby Blean, Robert Cowton, *Autobiography,* 3.
[132] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 35.
[133] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 33.
[134] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 40.
[135] Cowton, *Autobiography,* 38.

Cowton's first employment was as a clerk to Sir Edward Knatchbull's East Kent election campaign in 1832. This job left the militaristic rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' ringing in his ears, so prominently was it used by his supporters. He witnessed Knatchbull, at the head of a procession of five hundred 'yeomen', marching to his election triumph on Barham Downs with flags flying.[136] Soon after this, he decided he must give meaning to his 'listless' existence by becoming a soldier.[137] Full of patriotism and excitement, he left for London. As he passed through Chatham, he recollected that his 'young blood tingled as he thought fondly of what he might one day do in defence of his country'.[138]

However, unlike Knatchbull, his army career foundered at the very first hurdle. He failed to reach the required medical standards because he had a speech impediment, scuppering his ability, as a prospective officer, to shout commands. At first he was overcome with a feeling of 'dreary disappointment', quickly surpassed by the realisation that he could 'never return to Canterbury'. He knew that great scorn would be heaped upon 'one who had boasted that he would be a soldier and was rejected'. Cowton mused dejectedly on his shattered dreams, writing: '...all my bright hopes of 'battles, sieges, fortunes...and hair-breath escapes in the imminent deadly breach', were all dashed away, and gone forever'. He realised that he must bid 'farewell to the neighing steed...the spirit stirring drum...and all the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war'.[139]

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[136] Cowton, *Autobiography,* 67.
[137] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 69
[138] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 73.
[139] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 84.

Yet it is because he very soon found that there were alternative ways of attaining manhood available that we know about the lurid details of Cowton's life in the social world of post-war Canterbury. Soon after his rejection from the army, he found work at a London Counting House, and was invited to reside in the home of its Methodist proprietor. Brought up in the Anglican Church, little in Canterbury society or his family life had compelled him to make God an important part of his existence or adhere to religious values. In this new household, prayers and family worship were integral. Overcoming an initial 'great horror' for 'anything bordering upon Methodism',[140] Cowton eventually embraced it. Moreover, he apparently overcame his stammer by becoming a preacher! It was thus in the internal struggles of evangelical Christianity that Cowton found new meanings of 'true manhood' and a different vision of the battlefield, that of the 'Christian warrior': In his memoir, he captures his new idea of life in two lines of verse:

His warfare is within. There he toils,
And there he wins fresh victories o'er himself.[141]

Told here in very brief overview, Cowton's experiences highlight the conflicts that existed between discourses of evangelicalism and militaristic masculinities in the post-war era. In Cowton's case, he simply replaced one way of living with another,

[140] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 86-88.
[141] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 124. Cowton claims that these are the words of Robert Southey. I have been unable to trace these lines in Southey's poetry. However, they appear to be a reworking of some well known lines of the early evangelical poet and religious writer, William Cowper: His warfare is within. There unfatigued/ His fervent spirit labours. There he fights / And there he obtains fresh triumphs over himself, *The Task* (1775) lines 935-937, in William Cowper, *The Poetical Works of William Cowper* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1879), 283. Southey published a 'Life and Works' of Cowper in 1837.

almost completely rejecting his previous values and behaviour. Indeed, evangelicalism even provided a new framework for his understanding of death and war. He interpreted the demise of his elder brother in India in the light of heroic sacrifice for the British *Christian* cause, and rejoiced that his other brother had survived to 'tell of the wondrous mercy of Him who had made him the object of His loving care'.[142] Cowton's experiences also suggest that militaristic behaviour in its various forms was more readily acceptable to those whose public lives were limited to Kent. He overcame any conflict between his new religious lifestyle and the boisterous ways of life he had been accustomed to in Canterbury simply by not returning for many years.

5. Conclusion

What conclusions, then, can be drawn from these experiences? The dominance of militaristic masculinities becomes visible when the lens of analysis is focused on Kent, and people who interacted, for at least part of their lives, with the culture of Kentish politics. Being a 'Man of Kent' was about participating in a homosocial political social culture, dominated by links to and pride in the military and the county's quasi-military credentials. It encompassed behaviour and appearance that signified one's potential to work and defend land, whether one actually did so or not.

The 'yeomen' aspects of these identities – the image of a man who owned and controlled, if not worked, fertile land - mobilised Kentish men in local and national

[142] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 174.

political arenas. However, the military and forms of militarism were the more significant in the experiences, identities and subjectivities of the individuals I have analysed, with the possible exception of Hodges. Wartime events had a profound effect on those who went on to dominate post-war politics in Kent. For Hodges and Knatchbull, contrasting personal experiences of the war were a reference point for their actions in later years. For the younger generation, an army career or militaristic pretensions, along with participating in drinking culture, was still an important way of defining manhood. For Charles Knatchbull, like Hodges and his father before him, abrupt changes in his life - his involvement in the military's role in Britain's imperial expansion - led him to reflect upon the strength of his political convictions and upon what England – 'Old England' – meant to him. These men's identities, therefore, were painted upon a global canvas of war and Empire.

The pre-eminence of militaristic masculinities can only be understood in the context of the rise of other forms of masculinity, particular those related to discourses of evangelicalism and domesticity. For Edward Knatchbull, these tensions were most apparent later in his life, when he embraced evangelical Christianity and found that his public duties, and his previous attitudes to familial relationships and death, no longer sat comfortably with his new beliefs. The culture of Kentish politics clashed with his own personal support for the temperance movement. For Winchilsea, there were additional conflicts: that between his role as Captain of the 'Men of Kent', acting for the collective, his personal religious beliefs, and his own aristocratic notion of individual honour. Charles Knatchbull, of

a younger generation, keenly felt the clash between his religious devotion and his way of life as a young-man-about-Kent. In Robert Cowton's case, conflict both became evident and pressing when he discovered London Methodism. The guise of a 'Man of Kent', then, could be difficult to maintain outside the public and political arenas of provincial southern England, forcing those who perceived themselves as such into complicated negotiations and transformations.

While drinking culture persisted as part of some men's experiences, of all classes, into the Victorian era, the Kentish 'public sphere', which blurred the boundaries of the respectable and disrespectable and jarred with evangelical sensibilities, was historically specific. When Robert Cowton returned to Canterbury in the 1860s, the culture he encountered was now 'blessed' with the abundance of literary and religious societies and improvement associations. These were absent in his youth, only found in the cradles of middle-class and non-conformist dominance, such as Birmingham and Manchester.[143] Moreover, other definitional factors of post-war Kentish culture had faded. The generation that had experienced the Napoleonic conflicts were dead or no longer influential. The issues of the 1820s and 1830s, Catholic Emancipation, 'Reform' and 'agricultural protection', through which the 'Men of Kent' had been articulated were resolved or, in the case of 'Reform', transformed.[144] The relative positions of agricultural, industry and Empire to the prosperity of the nation had shifted again, in both regional and national contexts. The power of the 'agricultural interest' had been eroded by the repeal of the Corn

[143] Cowton, *Autobiography*, 32.
[144] Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Laws, although, in terms of yields and profits, they were also on the verge of another 'golden age'.[145] The identities and subjectivities of 'Men of Kent' in the mid Victorian era, then, if they saw themselves as 'Men of Kent' at all, would have been very different from those of previous generations. Indeed, it was in this period that devout Methodist preacher Robert Cowton, despite his condemnation of the culture of his youth and an absence for the best part of three decades, chose to proudly label his reconfigured self a 'Man of Kent'.

[145] F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*, 290.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The lovers of freedom, of wine, and of women,
As Greycoats, Kentish men, Men of Kent and Yeoman.
For William the Norman, at sight of such freedom,
As Greycoats, Kentish men, Men of Kent and Yeoman.
Tho' the Conqueror, left freedom, left wine, and left women
To Greycoats, Kentish men, Men of Kent and Yeoman.
Then drink, my brave boys, to our soldiers and seamen,
As Greycoats, Kentish men, Men of Kent and Yeoman.
To lovers of freedom, of wine, and of women,
To Greycoats, Kentish men, Men of Kent and Yeoman.
May our country still boast of such legions of Freemen,
As Greycoats, Kentish men, men of Kent and Yeoman.[1]

The lines were from the 1780s and sung in a jovial spirit, but they would have resonated emotively with the many celebrants of 'Men of Kent' in the era following the Napoleonic wars. Indeed, as this thesis has demonstrated, the identity of the 'Men of Kent' was then mobilised as never before, as a 'banal' rallying cry in politics, but also as a symbol of regionally specific masculine virtues. Being a 'Man of Kent' could also be a deeply-felt form of belonging to England, the county of Kent and, on occasions, to Britain and Empire.

In showing that this rhetoric had meaning and agency, I have looked beyond the veneer of politicians' speeches, to evidence including the multitudinous writings of journalists, the organisation and appearance of political meetings and campaigns, social and religious societies, personal letters and diaries, and literature and visual depictions. I have argued that Kent meant many things, but above all a powerful 'sense of place' was defined by its militarily strategic position, emphasised in propaganda during the European conflicts, and its predominantly agricultural

[1] 'Kentish Glee', originally printed in *KG*, 16/18/1782, quoted in De Vaynes, ed., *The Kentish Garland*, 244.

economy. Kent was the 'Vanguard of Liberty' and the 'Garden of England'. This 'sense of place' informed articulations of gender and nationhood.

To stake claims for, or defend, political rights and commercial interests, men in Kent drew upon the foundation myths of the 'Men of Kent', derived from the county's specific location and history as defenders of the nation, which now encompassed the repelling of Napoleon as well as 'William the Norman'. Kentish men also championed the 'yeoman': 'sturdy', 'plain dealing', and ready to defend to the death the land he tilled. Sometimes a specific inhabitant of the 'Garden of England', often a generic symbol of agricultural 'Englishness', his prosperity and health served as a metaphor for that of the wider nation. Both 'Men of Kent' and 'yeomen' were indicative of the value of working and defending land in the making of a man, important in rhetoric, if not always demonstrated in practice.

The 'Men of Kent' had an existence beyond language. The 'qualities' of the 'Men of Kent' were most successfully embodied by the Earl of Winchilsea, the 'Brunswickers', and their following of 'yeoman farmers' on Penenden Heath. Their 'sturdy' appearance and behaviour bolstered their power and hegemony.[2] The evidence from Penenden Heath, and the reappearance of the 'Men of Kent' at election times and in the 'Reform' campaigns of 1831 in 1832, strongly suggests that similar forms of masculinity were asserted more generally by those in public life in rural and provincial England at this time, and not solely through the language of the 'Men of Kent'.

[2] These theories were inspired by Butler, *Bodies that Matter* and Connell, *Masculinities*.

The 'Men of Kent', may have been 'lovers' of 'women', but women played a peripheral role in imaginings of the 'county' and county identities. This was partially because of strong associations between 'Men of Kent', 'yeomen' and the idea of bearing arms and owning land, and partially because of the gendering of the Kent 'county community', which marginalised women, even when they were not completely excluded. Although the 'Men of Kent' were utilised by the 'liberal' minority during the emancipation crisis, to advocate Catholic emancipation, another dominant characteristic was their Protestantism. Indeed, at their most iconic moment on Penenden Heath in 1828, 'Men of Kent' were about the defence of the Protestant Constitution – a cause which brought out in force even the nearly-forgotten 'Greycoats' along with practically every other regional symbol of patriotism.

The language and rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' demonstrated that, rather than being of secondary importance to nationhood, regional forms of belonging were a prime way through which 'Englishness' was expressed and imagined. In a form broadly comparable to European national imaginings, such as the German idea of *Heimat*, groups and individuals could identify with the wider nation through imaginings of local roots, and the regional past.[3] Rather than undermining a sense of nationhood with 'intense localism', regionalism, in the sense of imaginings of the 'county', defined a sense of nationhood.[4] This contention adds new elements to

[3] Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor*, 155-9, Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 3-4.
[4] For 'localism' as a force acting against national integration, see Colley, *Britons*, 393.

debates about the inter-relationship of 'Englishness', 'Britishness', the four nations, and Empire, which have so far given scant attention to region in this period.

Several qualifications are required for this argument. Firstly, the 'county' was far from the only framework through which the nation was imagined. Representations of generic 'Englishness' stood alongside regional specificity, although these could also be contingent upon economic locations. In Kent, ideas of the peculiar prosperity of the *Kentish* yeomen and the beauty and affluence of the 'Garden of England' influenced articulations of 'Old England' as well as gendered identities. 'Old England' stood for a peaceful, prosperous, yet hierarchical 'yeomen' society, and was a powerful and complex vision of the 'nation'. The intimate, enclosed, rural landscapes, that were seen to characterise Kent, but also distinguished many other areas of southern and agrarian England, epitomised 'Englishness', and foreshadowed the 'South Country' of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[5]

Secondly, the significance of the 'county' in Kent was culturally and historically specific. In the early 1820s, when popular politics was restricted, the 'county' was relatively moribund, in political rhetoric at least. It then took on particular significance in the later 1820s, through the evolution of county-orientated institutions such as the press and county meetings and through the vibrant political culture stimulated by campaigns surrounding Catholic Emancipation and 'Reform'.

[5] Brace, 'Finding England Everywhere: Regional Identity and the Construction of National Identity, 1890-1940', Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England'.

These fuelled hierarchical conceptions of the 'county', inflected along the lines of class and gender, but which could, on occasions, become widely inclusive, indicative of an expanding 'public sphere'.

A militaristic language of leaders and ranks, often associated with the 'Men of Kent', was utilised to label and understand the evolving and expanding 'public sphere', which reached its peak, in terms of the importance of the 'county', in the heightened political fervour of 1828 to 1832. Dominant forms of socialisation and culture also help explain the popularity of the 'Men of Kent' and 'Yeomen'. Despite the presence of evangelical societies, drinking culture dominated political and social gatherings. Shared drinking culture could bring together male groups from many different social backgrounds, even if any sense of unity was inherently fragile. Moreover, military spectacle, and the volunteer Yeomanry Cavalry, proved remarkably popular – militarism, even if purely rhetorical, was important to public displays of masculinity in these relatively benign forms. Many 'Men of Kent', then, saw themselves as 'lovers of...wine and of women', who drank with gusto to 'our soldiers and seamen'. By the late 1830s, however, regional perspectives on national issues were dominated by the campaigns of the 'landed interest', who increasingly summoned up the more generic rhetoric of 'Old England'. The 'Men of Kent' continued to exist in songs, clubs and literature, but faded into the background of county politics.

To detect such strong assertions of masculine identity in this period is not surprising. As Roper and Tosh have argued, gendered notions, particularly aggressively masculine ones, have been asserted most strongly in the face of paradox, ambiguity and threat.[6] Nationwide, this was an era of turmoil and change: political citizenship, gender roles, conceptions of nationhood, and Britain's status as a world power were all undergoing crucial periods of redefinition, and there was widespread domestic unrest. Representations of the 'yeomen of Old England', particularly, were integrated into ongoing fears about the agricultural economy, the 'state of the nation' and perceived threats from 'industrialists', free-traders and anti-Corn Law campaigners with their power bases elsewhere.

Focusing the lens of analysis on Kent gained new perspectives on masculinities and related conceptions of societal hierarchies in this era. The qualities of 'Men of Kent' and 'Yeomen', so strongly asserted against this backdrop, suggest that the hegemonic discourses of manhood in Kent, and possibly throughout rural and provincial southern England, contrasted with the domestic, evangelical, and 'civilising' masculinities that were in the ascendancy in metropolitan and industrial areas in the post-war era. As Catherine Hall has demonstrated, urban middle-class men adhered to domestic ideologies and defined their individual subject-hood and independence against dependent women, children, servants and colonial 'Others'.[7] 'Men of Kent' and 'yeomen', however, could turn to more militaristic models, alongside familial hierarchies, as models for social relationships, at least in public

[6] M. Roper and J. Tosh, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), 1.
[7] C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 27.

and political life. Their national belonging was framed by the interdependence of England and its land on the 'Men of Kent', the defenders of the nation. Meanwhile, their individual actions were placed in the context of their loyalty to, and interdependence with, other 'Men of Kent'. Conceptions of 'Old England', on the other hand, conjured up neo-feudal visions of familial bonds between 'landlord, yeomen and peasant', which existed fairly comfortably alongside more obviously contemporary imaginings of the moral and social values of an independent middle class - also often constructed, with reference to agrarian 'golden ages', as the 'yeoman of England'.[8]

The pre-eminence of militaristic and agrarian masculinities in post-war Kentish culture, can also only be understood in the context of the rise of other, sometimes competing, forms of masculinity. Such conflicts, rather than being simply between different 'types' of men, marked personal subjectivities. The Knatchbull diaries, for example, illustrated the conflicts between public life as a 'Man of Kent' and personal, evangelical religion. For Sir Edward Knatchbull conflicts increased over the period as his religiosity intensified. In the case of the Earl of Winchilsea and his duel, there were additional conflicts: between the civilised masculinities of 'polite society', his role as Captain of the 'Men of Kent', acting for the collective, and his own aristocratic notion of individual honour.

[8] This view is supported by Matthew McCormack's account of masculinities and conceptions of 'independence' amongst the 'romantic right' in the 1820s and 1830s, MacCormack, *The Independent Man*, 172-3.

Research into this area of competing masculinities is far from complete. More investigation is required to understand configurations of gendered identities in other areas of maritime and agricultural southern England, and to more fully understand the influence that experiences of the war had on individuals and collective political action in Kent, and this wider region, in the post-war period.[9] Questions are still to be explored concerning generational change: about the behaviour and identities of those who experienced the wars, either as volunteers, regular soldiers or civilians, and those, such as Robert Cowton, who were not alive during the war itself, but grew up in a culture in which signs and stories of the conflicts were prominent. While I conclude that being a 'Man of Kent' influenced individuals' behaviour and self-perceptions, much research remains to be done.

Another area for further investigation is the articulation of regional identity amongst the labouring poor. My research has concluded that regional discourses of belonging delineated inclusion and exclusion from the 'county' and 'nation'. The labouring poor occupied a liminal position in conceptions of the 'county'. They were included when they sat on the peripheries of meetings, cheered on cue, drank beer and played the role of the rank-and-file of the 'Men of Kent'. When less acquiescent, as in the 'Swing' riots of 1830, their 'Kentishness' and even

[9] A survey of the newspapers in Hampshire and Sussex, also southern, maritime counties, with predominantly agrarian economies and militarily strategic positions, suggest that, while military display and militaristic language were common, the language and rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent' provided the Kent 'county community' with a heightened, militaristic language, and a stronger sense of identity, through which political opinions were expressed, and masculinity was articulated. Another reason for there being a less defined 'sense' of the 'county' in these areas, appears to be the less vibrant nature, and less confrontational stances, of its newspapers. Hampshire, for example, only boasted two major papers, the *Southampton Herald, and Isle of Wight Gazette*, and the *Hampshire Chronicle*, both of which held broadly Tory opinions.

'Englishness' was negated in elite discourses. On the other hand, regionally-specific forms of belonging had roots in rural popular culture, as William Cobbett's writing indicates. In varying ways, 'Old England' and 'golden age' pasts were utilised to make sense of past, present and future. Evidence from 'Swing' and other forms of protest also tentatively suggests the resonance of stories of the 'unconquered Men of Kent' in popular culture, and of the influence of the unprecedented political activity in the county in 1828 upon the outbreak of unrest in 1830.

A related area that requires further interrogation from a gender perspective is masculine dominated drinking and associational culture, long acknowledged as an integral part of provincial politics in the early nineteenth century.[10] The boisterousness and, on occasions, the apparent absurdity of the 'Men of Kent' and their drinking songs, and the nature of their political causes, led them to be denigrated by their contemporaries, and hitherto neglected by historians. The Penenden Heath meeting was one of the largest gatherings of the early nineteenth century, yet social and Marxist narratives have overlooked it because of its 'reactionary' politics, while empiricists and historians of the 'right', while giving the Brunswick Society a 'nod', have paid little attention to its cultural meanings.[11] Winchilsea's London image, as a 'blockhead', also characterised most historians' accounts.[12] However, to overlook phenomenon that are simply not 'intellectual' or 'heroic' enough, is to overlook important elements of any culture. Indeed, we

[10] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel.*
[11] J.D.C.Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832*, 397.
[12] See ch.7.2.ii.

currently interact with a national culture that selects its masculine icons from footballers and drink and drug-sodden 'celebrities', and a world order in which the most powerful man is George W. Bush. With an appreciation for historical specificity, this suggests that boisterousness, drinking culture and banality, can have more power, and tell us more about hegemonic culture than many academics would care to admit.[13]

Kentish identities were fractured by race and ethnicity, as well as class. Kent was part of an imperial power, and conceptions of the European and colonial 'Other' underpinned identities. Ireland was an almost constant, shadowy 'Other', hiding behind many confident avowals of the 'Men of Kent's' virility and Kentish beauty, just as accounts of Daniel O'Connell and his followers filled the columns of the newspapers next to stories of the latest exploits of the 'Men of Kent'. This was far from solely because of their Catholicism. Ideas about 'Irishness' were also dependent upon knowledge of unrest in Ireland, anxieties about the consequences of the Act of Union, and deep insecurity about the domestic economy, all of which made Irish labourers, present in Kent, particularly visible and a focus for blame. Discourses of religion, ethnicity and even of race – analogous to those levied at people of colour in Britain's more distant colonies - were drawn upon to articulate 'difference', ideas then used to interpret so-called 'insurrection' among the local poor as well as in Ireland. The prominent dissemination of knowledge about

[13] This mindset is closely related to that of E.H.Carr's 'Cleopatra's nose' theory, which distinguishes between the changes and events in history driven by the 'rational' minds of men, which are judged to be historically significant, and the allegedly accidental and irrational, E.H.Carr, *What is History?* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 127.

Ireland, then, influenced Kentish culture. Indeed, the 1828 county meeting on Penenden Heath was also partially a response to the Catholic Association's 'monster meetings' in Ireland. Kentish identities, and wider culture, therefore, need to be viewed in the context of England's quasi-colonial relationship with Ireland in the wake of the Act of Union.

Anxieties about the Irish highlight Kent's liminality. The county's identity in the 1820s and 1830s was, once again, historically specific. Nevertheless, this liminality was ongoing. Kent's unique geographical location has continued to fuel a 'sense of place'. The 'county' is still perceived as a 'rural idyll' close to London – South Eastern Railways and the Kent tourist board regularly advertise daytrips to 'the Garden of England'.[14] Kent continues to be first point of arrival and last point of departure for many travellers between Britain and mainland Europe. Against the backdrop of this ongoing transience, people in Kent have continued to articulate a strong sense of nationhood, with a regional twist. The Kent 'Invicta' remains the logo of Kent County Council.[15] In 2007, *Kent on Sunday* boasts a logo featuring cherries and oasthouses, again symbolising the 'Garden of England', and spitfires - indicating Kent's defensive role in the Second World War, when the image of the 'Vanguard of Liberty' was underpinned by the iconic image of the white cliffs of Dover.[16] Kent's nationalism has also continued to be expressed as hostility to 'newcomers', a sentiment reflected in its politics: Conservatives have dominated the county's parliamentary representatives since the 1830s, as they have throughout the

[14] 'Visit Kent 2007': www.visitkent.co.uk.
[15] Kent County Council website: <www.kent.gov.uk>
[16] *Kent Observer* and *Kent on Sunday* website: <www.kentnews.co.uk>

so-called 'home counties'.[17] More sinisterly, separatist political organisations such as The U.K. Independence Party and the British National Party continue to attract widespread support, particularly in the east of the county.[18] The region, then, and even the identity of the 'county' itself, persists to loom large in discourses of nationhood, which continue to be contingent upon specific geographical, social and economic configurations. Indeed, possibly only a long-term analysis over centuries rather than decades, although an enormous undertaking, could best tell the story of Kent's typicality or 'exceptionalism' in nation-making projects, alongside comparative studies with other regions and counties.

That, however, is far beyond the parameters of this project. I set out to reveal the power and limitations of regional identities in the years following 1815, and explore the dominance of specific conceptions of masculinity in regional discourses of nationhood. In this period, challenges to the boundaries of the nation were being continually made or rebuffed – through 'Reform', Catholic Emancipation and economic distress. Fuelled by this instability, strong discourses of regional identity framed discourses of gender and nationhood. The virtues of militarism and agrarianism were celebrated as exemplary qualities of manhood, existing in tandem, and sometimes in conflict with, gender roles associated with evangelicalism and domesticity. The legacy of the Napoleonic wars, and the

[17] Brian Atkinson, 'Conservative and Liberal: National politics in Kent from the late 1820s to 1914'; J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'British Elections in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. A Regional Approach', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 95, no. 375 (1980).
[18] A breakdown of the Kent 1995 general election results are found at <www.bbc.co.uk/kent/news/features/election_2005/index.shtml>. For an appeal for unity against the growth of the BNP in the Medway cities see, <www.stopthebnp.org.uk/index.php?location=news&art=654>

militaristic images of masculinity which then proliferated, were significant: Men in Kent continued to draw upon the wartime rhetoric of the 'Men of Kent', well into an era of so-called peace. Kentish 'Englishness' was also crucially underpinned by ideas about 'difference', from colonised people, from the European and Irish 'Other', from the people of other English counties, women, and even their 'own', beleaguered poor. With one eye on the local landscape and one eye on the wider world, then, understanding the 'Men of Kent' breaks down monolithic accounts of 'Englishness' in the early nineteenth century.

Nine. Abbreviations

BL	British Library
BLHL	Bromley Local History Library
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies
CPR	Cobbett's Political Register
FH	Finch-Hatton Collection
HO	Home Office
KC	Kentish Chronicle
KCMS	Kent Church Missionary Society
KG	Kentish Gazette
KH	Kent Herald
EKAC	East Kent Archive Centre
MGKC	Maidstone Gazette and Kentish Courier
MJKA	Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser
NRO	Northampton Records Office
PP	Parliamentary Papers
USSC	University of Southampton Special Collections

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The Dover Chronicle, and Cinque Ports and Kent Advertiser

The Dover Telegraph and Cinque Ports General Advertiser

Gentleman's Magazine

Hampshire Chronicle

Hampshire Telegraph, and Sussex Chronicle

Invicta Magazine

Kentish Gazette

Kent Herald

John Bull

The Man of Kent, or Canterbury, Political and Weekly Miscellany,

Maidstone Gazette and Kentish Courier

Maidstone Journal and Kent Advertiser

The Morning Chronicle

The Norfolk Yeoman's Gazette and Eastern Advertiser; for the Counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridge and Herts.

Old England

Old England and Constitution

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